SPECIAL CULTURAL NUMBER

JANUARY 18
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NEW MASSES

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THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN CULTURE

by Alain Locke

HISTORY IN FICTION

by Henrietta Buckmaster, Howard Fast, William Blake

NEW CHARACTERS FOR THE SCREEN

by Robert Rossen

WARTIME COUNTY FAIR

by Meridel Le Sueur

POEMS

by Eve Merriam, Edwin Rolfe, Genevieve Taggard
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POETRY: RED-BAITING VICTIM

by Isidor Schneider

***ART WORK:** William Gropper, Louis Lozowick, Mary Barnett, Harry Sternberg, Milton Horn, Mervin Jules, Tromka, Raphael Soyer*

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Dear Friends:

This should have been my cartoon of the week, but I am called upon to write you a letter.

Perhaps you might be interested to know that long before the New Masses became a weekly and since that time to this very day, I have contributed my drawings and cartoons every week without payment for my work. I consider it a privilege and honor to appear in the New Masses, I am honestly thankful for the faith in Humanity, and the brave courageous pioneer struggles against Fascism and Reaction that the New Masses has stood for.

As one contributor and supporter of the New Masses to another, I ask you to match me. to contribute either weekly, monthly or yearly to the support of the New Masses.

Yours

Bill Gropper

P.S.- Please turn to page 30.

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NEW MASSES
VOL. L JANUARY 18, 1944 No. 3

WITH this issue NEW MASSES inaugurates a bi-monthly cultural feature devoted chiefly to literature and the other arts.

The approaching climax of the war makes imperative a careful exploration of every area of American life. In the cultural area, no less than in the political and economic, we face grave danger as well as unparalleled promise. We can move toward moral weariness, alienation of the artist from the people, obscurantism, and anarchic dissipation of our creative resources; or we can, affirming the historic advance at Teheran, consolidate a democratic culture which not only reflects but molds the healthy elements in our national life, builds upon our vital traditions, and enriches our interchange with the other free peoples of the world.

The one way leads back to reaction and intellectual suicide; the other moves into a future in which the artist and scholar may achieve fruitful integration in a constructive society. Direct participation in the war against fascism is teaching more clearly than any theory the meaning of this choice.

It is our desire that these pages provide a meeting ground for all who seek earnestly to meet the challenge of increasing cultural effectiveness in winning the war and securing the peace. This challenge cannot be met with a manifesto or a formula. An exploratory approach, avoiding both dogmatism and nervelessness, is required. Every democratic writer has a share in the contribution. Particularly the younger writers, most of them in the services today, should have as many outlets as possible where they may creatively express their new experiences and ideas. We look forward also to an intermingling in this section of writers and artists from other lands who are joined with Americans today, as they will be after the war, in a great fraternal and humanistic enterprise. And here the Negro artist may freely advance the position in American culture which, as Professor Locke notes, is still denied by our discriminatory society to its own shame and detriment.

The editors have long hoped to resume publication of a literary supplement, but the paper shortage combined with the cost of printing an added section has blocked this hope for the moment. The present plan was adopted as a workable alternative. While it necessarily involves a sacrifice of general editorial matter one week out of every eight, it helps fill a special need which has become more acute with the shrinkage of periodical media for outstanding creative work and serious discussion of the arts.

The success of this venture will depend largely on the sustained cooperation of the writers and artists themselves. There are new characters to be drawn, as Robert Rossen and Meridel Le Sueur report; there is a fight to be waged against the restraints of reaction, as Isidor Schneider emphasizes; there is a great tradition to be brought to bear on the present, as Henrietta Buckmaster, William Blake, and Howard Fast show in their symposium; there are new images to be shaped of a world being won on the battlefront. NEW MASSES warmly invites the participation of all democratic writers and artists in this project.

This special number was edited by Samuel Sillen, with the assistance of Marjorie De Armand.

THE EDITORS.

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The Negro in American Culture

By Alain Locke

FOLLOWING the first world war, and partly as a result of its galvanizing effects, the artistic culture of the Negro attained a new spiritual dynamic of self-expression and set in motion a rising tide of cultural recognition for the Negro. Although Negro creative talent found thereby a new audience and became a new force in American art and letters, these gains pivoted principally upon certain internal minority developments of self-discovery and increased cultural maturity; so that the period was appropriately described as the emergence in art of a "new Negro."

Now, once again, the repercussions of another world war seem to be providing the favoring context of other significant gains, this time more in the direction of a fundamental change of majority attitude toward the Negro and his culture. For the Negro artist is not yet a fully accepted freeman of our American cultural estate, and to that extent we are all of us that much short of complete cultural democracy. As American creative art has broken previous precedents and increasingly treated Negro materials representatively and used Negro idioms more seriously, it may be considered that by now the Negro elements in our culture have about reached the mainstream of native American art. And in certain fields, notably in interpretative music and, to a less but growing degree, in the fine arts, the Negro artist has successfully achieved parity and integration with his fellow artists as a fully accepted and acknowledged collaborator in the national culture.

But this is as yet too largely a matter of a passport to Parnassus rather than the freedom of the market-place. The general American public still knows and cares to know an unrepresentative and often a misrepresentative Negro, and it is against this last barrier to full cultural freedom that the advancing art of the Negro must move. Since much of the Negro's artistic folk-products have become the common spiritual currency of the land—his folk music and folklore particularly—and since the strongest influences in our popular American music and dance stem from the same Negro sources, it is peculiarly appropriate, apart even from the general imperatives of democracy in our culture, that the Negro's fullest artistic capabilities find popular acceptance and favor. Indeed, not until then will the Negro receive the fullest credit for the cultural contributions which he has already made, contributions which in the judgment of the few who fully know, already have made American culture permanently the Negro's debtor.

If wider acceptance and vogue for the more representative phases of the Negro's art is the next advance step, as it seems to be, it is particularly significant and encouraging to observe signs of enlarging change in this respect in those two hitherto unyielding citadels of popular convention and taste, Broadway and Hollywood: distinct signs from one, faint but diagnostic ones from the other. For if the Negro is ever to become a full freeholder of American culture, these are the two Jerichos whose walls must come tumbling down.

There is incontestable evidence of radical change in Broadway's spectacularly successful productions already this season —the Robeson *Othello*, Katherine Dunham's Negro ballet *Tropical Revue*, and *Carmen Jones*, with the promise of other convention-smashing innovations to come. The true significance of these productions to date is not merely that of having been successful on Broadway. It is rather that they have successfully gambled against odds under liberal or canny management and have caused box-office results to contradict the box-office formula of limited bounds and limiting stereotypes for Negro musical and dramatic art. For in all of them, the Negro artist comes to center stage in full stature, and manifests himself more racially representative through being less racially circumscribed.

FIRST and foremost, of course, is that proper artistic courage and integrity of the Theater Guild-Margaret Webster production of *Othello*, which by casting a competent Negro actor in the stellar role, presents at last with such illuminating force Shakespeare's original values undistorted and unblurred. But highly significant, too, is the intriguing colloquial adaptation of *Carmen Jones*, which, thanks to the added spice of Negro idiom, successfully Americanizes the world's most popular opera, and at the same time, thanks to the retention of Bizet's original music score, vindicates so convincingly the straight operatic capabilities of Negro singers and actors. Far from negligible, too, are the lessons of the Dunham Ballet—a revealing demonstration of the potentialities of American Negro dance idioms and of primitive African motifs and rhythms for creative use in formal ballet. The public has also had another occasion to appraise the uniquenesses of straight primitive African dance and pantomime as presented in a festival revival of Asadata Horton's African Dance Group; this time, not as the exotic tidbit of *Kykunkor* fame of some years back, but under distinguished interracial patronage as a serious symbol of the new relationship and significance of Africa to the modern world.

It does seem as though Broadway was on the march toward fuller, more enlightening representation for the Negro. For the previous successes, pathbreaking though they were, still had some limiting qualifications: *Porgy* and *Green Pastures* and *Mamba's Daughters* had the shell of broken stereotypes sticking to their fledgling backs, and *Stevedore*, *Mulatto*, and *Native Son* had their special problem appeals and therefore thrived on a special audience.

AS TO Hollywood, under the spur of wartime pressure for more democratic morale, even that recalcitrant colossus, whose stubborn and undemocratic stereotyping has hitherto raised such a formidable barrier to a full and proper knowledge and appreciation of the Negro by the great American public, has been moved to make a few concessions. Technically in such full length films as *Stormy Weather*, *Cabin in the Sky*, then in the approximate parity for Negro talent in the many war cavalcades of stars—*Stage Door Canteen*, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, *Thousands Cheer*, *I Dood It*, which brought Lena Horne, Ethel Waters, Hazel Scott and others to stellar position, and substantively in such subject-matter integrations as the role of Kenneth Spencer in *Bataan* and Canada Lee in *Lifeboat*, the great American movie, if it does not retreat, has set out some distance on the road to Negro cultural freedom. Clearly made as concessions, often antidoted by the sure-fire stereotypes of "Rochester" and "Bojangles," it is significant that these innovations have found unexpected favor with the general public. Indeed, a newly whetted public appetite may be the means of keeping and widening these important artistic gains. The more we ponder such developments, the more we can see in them timely and appropriate reinforcements of cultural democraey. In due time we shall recognize them as quite as important for the soundness and richness of the majority culture as for the moral health and creative vigor of the culture of the Negro minority.

Gradually as the more serious aspects of the Negro's art win this wider audience, we shall witness a Negro art that will have

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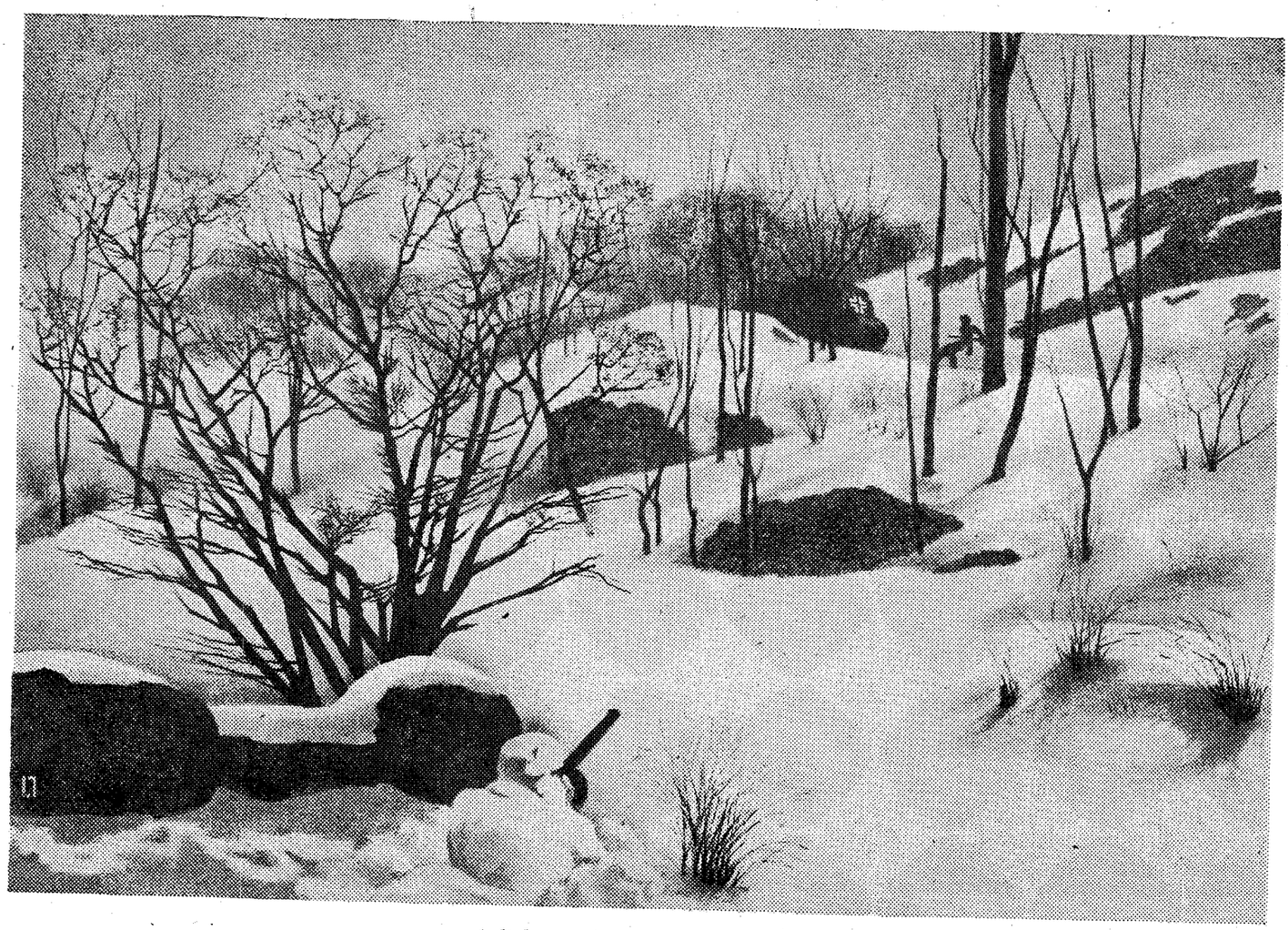
constructive social effect as an art that can both entertain and socially enlighten. For the Negro, unusually creative through almost all the stages of his race career, has had to ascend gradually against odds of belittlement and condescension from slave troubador and minstrel-entertainer to the dignity and freedom of the full-fledged artist.

Similarly, too, the recognition of the value of the Negro cultural contribution itself. Not until generations after their generation of origin were the spirituals properly recognized and valued for the priceless musical contribution they are. Only within recent memory can we date the real discovery of what the Negro peasant so humbly and anonymously contributed to American folklore, American dance, and American music. It is from the Negro's richly productive folk period that we inherit the very considerable Uncle Remus saga, the less recognized but equally important John Henry and other hero tales, the spirituals themselves, the "blues" and other secular song-forms, the basic folk-dances which have developed into our modern dance steps and given their idioms of rhythm and harmony to both our most representative popular and serious modern American music. This is a formidable contribution, unmatched by any other single ethnic minority, and instead of remaining static at its own folk level, it has penetrated every layer of our culture, from bottom to top, proving its inherent artistic power and versatility.

THESE Negro folk elements, though they stem from slavery, have the breath of spiritual and often social freedom in them, and though intimately racial, have an elemental and basic human universality which assures them of their wide and perennial appeal and meaning. They are almost unique among folk products for having been spun almost entirely out of borrowed cultural materials, yet being such masterpieces of creative assimilation as to excel in quality and originality their models.

It is this sort of creative alchemy that the best Negro music inherits and exhibits today, whether it be the folk art of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Billie Holiday, the jazz and ragtime ingenuities of Handy, Fletcher Henderson, James P. Johnson, Clarence Williams or Duke Ellington, the subtle emotional penetration of the art of Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Dorothy Maynor as singers, or the distinctive originalities of such formal composers as Will Marion Cook, Harry Burleigh, Hall Johnson, William Dawson, Reginald Forsythe, or William Grant Still.

There is something too vital about a great deal of Negro music for it to succumb completely on the one hand to the cheapening vulgarizations of popular music and commercialized entertainment and on the other to the dead sterilities of academic musical form and convention. This places the Negro musician of today, provided he is given free scope and opportunity, in a position of strategic advantage, especially in creative composition, the field in which, except for the production of jazz—and not always there—he has not as yet had equal opportunity and sustained encouragement. Yet from no other single source is a truly original and characteristic American music most likely to come than from just this source, once it has successfully combined the heritage of the folk tradition and the standard equipment of the traditions of formal music. With the younger generation Negro musician, just that sort of merger is in the making: many, if not most of them, even some of the practicing popular musicians like the late "Fats" Waller, have a competent mastery of serious, formal music, which augurs well for further progress in this, the Negro's most fully developed cultural mode of art expression.



A lithograph by Louis Lozowick

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IN THE other arts, with the possible exception of poetry, so inherently close to the freedom of lyric song, and in oratory and polemical rhetoric, so intimately stimulated since anti-slavery days by the dynamic of a racial cause, the Negro has experienced an inevitable handicap of wide-scale exclusion from formal culture. Yet even in such arts, the formal fine arts, drama, and general literature, the occasional exceptions are astonishing. Only recently, in the light of what are often taken to be novel first-time conquests, does the careful historian of Negro cultural development come across early overlooked or forgotten Negro pioneers in these fields. But all along since colonial days, in all of the arts, there have been these vindicating exceptions. One can cite, just as random samples, Phyllis Wheatley, the Boston slave poet, contemporary of the American Revolution, celebrating it in fact in competent occasional verses; the quite considerable literary output of the slave narratives and the anti-slavery polemics of Negroes during the Abolitionist period, the art of Edmonia Lewis, sculptress of the Civil War period, of Joshua Johnston as portrait painter of late colonial days in Maryland, and the later artist painters of the mid-nineteenth century, William Simpson of Boston, Edward Bannister of Providence, R.I., Robert Duncanson of Cincinnati; merely to mention in passing such pioneer literary figures as William Wells Brown, with his early first novel of 1852, Martin Delaney, with his essays of 1851, Frederick Douglass with his truly great autobiography and speeches, inaugurated by his *My Bondage and Freedom* of 1845.

However, in the formal arts, with few exceptions, the significant development has come within our own times, but then in terms of more than single outstanding individuals. Really representative Negro art more properly dates from clusters of talent, linked in some definite consciousness of group representativeness, if indeed not some definitely organized program of racial self-expression. In poetry, this dates from the early 1920's, which saw the emergence of such poets as Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Langston Hughes, and the maturing of the poetic genius of James Weldon Johnson, who in his first period had followed the popular but waning tradition of Paul Lawrence Dunbar. This outburst was tantamount to a literary movement—the cultural awakening previously referred to as the first real maturing of Negro creative expression. It was quickly followed in the twenties by waves of other productivity in the fields of the novel and short story, and later, in the thirties for the most part, in the drama and the fine arts. It was under the direct stimulus of the Federal Theater and the Federal Art Project that the artistic outbursts of the thirties in drama, painting, and sculpture matured to parallel for that decade the outstanding spurt of the twenties in poetry and literature generally.

By this time, the esthetic trends of the former decade had, fortunately, given way to the social content emphasis of American realism. The Negro art expression of this later decade definitely reflected this change, and took on native realism and social significance emphasis after the manner of the time. Even Negro poetry began to run in the social protest vein; while with growing seriousness of social analysis, the prose output chose either to affiliate with the new Southern regionalism or with Marxist sociological realism. We have both trends dividing our serious contemporary literary expression; with writers like Zora Hurston, Walter Turpin, Sterling Brown representing the one and Richard Wright certainly as an outstanding exponent of the other.

FOR the literary and art historian, the personalities back of these developments are, of course, important; but for this panoramic survey, the general trends have more significance. Of these, one of the most outstanding is the ever-widening range of the Negro's cultural expression, spreading out from his traditional arts of music and poetry to arts not yet associated in the public mind with these better-known specialties of Negro genius. Particularly is this so of painting and sculpture, where the development of the last five years has uncovered such uniquely original talents as Horace Pippin and Jacob Lawrence, in addition to whole constellations of Negro artist groups like those now in Harlem, Chicago, and Atlanta. Indeed on present prospects it is not risky to predict for the near future a startling contribution of this younger talent to American painting and sculpture.

Another outstanding trend with Negro artists has been the gradual subordination of racialism in expression as a dominant motive to more technical motivations of art-style, and also to ideological alignments with various schools of social thought. It is largely in such ways that the Negro artists of today have so rapidly integrated themselves in the various arts with their fellow American artists. So marked has this sense of professional collaboration become that such wholesome integration with prevailing trends in the several art-fields is now the general rule rather than the exception. This promising democratic merger has been made all the easier by the fact that so many, and an increasing number of white writers, dramatists, and artists have, in their turn, made common cause with the Negro artist in aiming to express Negro life and experience sympathetically and with representative truth and integrity. The artistic tide has so turned in this direction that so far as the artist is concerned, the rightful place of the Negro in American culture seems reasonably assured. It is the public's lagging acceptance of this which for the moment, as we have just seen, holds up the promising progression.

It is the public and democratic inclusion of the Negro artist in his rightful place in the national culture which must climax this whole historical development. The cultural recognition of the Negro began first with the belated recognition of the cultural worth of the Negro folk spirit and its hitherto unrecognized folk-gifts. There followed an appreciative reception of the artistic talents and creative contributions of the Negro artist in the formal arts. Then followed a happy discovery of the place of the Negro cultural elements in the building of a native American culture. Finally we seem to have come to a realization of the need for full freedom and unrestricted integration of the Negro artist himself, in order that he may be in a position to make his contribution most representatively from the viewpoint of the minority culture and more effectively from the point of view of the national culture itself. If we can achieve this, we will at last have achieved for the Negro as well as for all of us a vital and worthwhile cultural democracy.

Alain Locke, professor of philosophy at Howard University, has for twenty years been a leading spokesman and interpreter of the American Negro's cultural development, which he has described in a number of books.

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History in Fiction

Henrietta Buckmaster, William Blake, Howard Fast

IN THE dear dead days I was a conspicuously poor student at the fine School for Girls which I attended. Yet in one subject I received an unvarying ninety-nine percent (the missing one percent was due to faulty punctuation), and history was that subject. This means that I loved history with all my romantic heart. This means that I was forced eventually to come to many conclusions about the study of history.

Let me put the primary conclusion as simply as possible: History has no value whatsoever unless it becomes to us a living instrument for explaining how and why and when and with what weapons the people of the world have fought for progress, for enlargement of life, for defeat of whatever would seek to rob man of his high birthright. I believe this with no modifying adverbs. Only if the retelling of history accomplishes this does it justify itself.

And I believe that this is exactly what history does accomplish. It then becomes the obligation of the writer, who deals in historical material, to be satisfied with nothing less than the ultimately and unequivocally positive, the recognition of the continuity of past and present.

We, as exponents of a democratic culture, are on the side of life. This means, then, that we are on the side of all those countless human beings who, with fortitude and passion and stone determination, pushed forward, with the sweat of their own hearts and minds, the great chariot of history.

I am an American. Therefore I am profoundly concerned with American history, not for reasons of exclusiveness but because I believe that an American may be gifted with the power of insight into the evolution of American hopes and realizations. One ancestor fought in the Revolutionary War, others left the South of slavery and made their way into the wilderness of Ohio. My grandmother read one chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and one chapter of the Bible every night before she went to sleep, and lullabied my mother with "John Brown's Body."

I *know* that Americans have their roots in a love of freedom, and I know that many of my forebears were of that lunatic fringe of idealists who believed that men deserved a decent world in which to live. I know that that decent world has not yet come. As a writer, I choose therefore to ally myself with the realities which have brought us, in this year of grace, to a present which is hot and heaving with the climax of all that has passed since the Hebrew prophets proclaimed an ideal of brotherhood, and the European world gave a heritage of vision and determination to her children of the new world.

Truth is indivisible. The men who fought for freedom with Wat Tyler or with Nathaniel Bacon are not withheld from us by the intervening years. The German democrats who fought the Prussia of 1848 are our brothers here and now because they speak our language and assure us once again of the inevitability of the future. The American Abolitionists are closer to us than many of our friends, for they have already paced our steps for us and laid before our eyes the pattern of the greatest social struggle our United States has ever known, a struggle which has not yet reached its end.

How can I, then, as a writer, ever tire of learning the continuity of life and faith? It is my figurative task to tell the story of the Germans of 1848, and identify their accomplishments with our efforts, and attempt to communicate the reasons for their failures. As a writer, and a human being, I must help to keep intact the solid wall that was built by Negro slaves and white Abolitionists, the solid wall which brought the letter of emancipation and can now bring the spirit. No page of our history exists out of relation to the present. What was lost was passed on for our redeeming. We do not move in a present **vacuum.**

If the artist-writer wishes to deal with reality in some of its most glowing and affirmative aspects, he is bound to draw upon this nourishment, which is as fructifying and essential as the earth from which the tree draws life. He is dealing with one of the manifold expressions of life. And as life, it says to all who listen, "Lift up now your heads, for the day draweth nigh."

HENRIETTA BUCKMASTER.

HISTORICAL fiction proper must be distinguished from the costume novel or the novel using the past merely for "atmosphere," whether in language, customs, or "background" events. It is a complement to history considered either as chronicle or as data selected to indicate a scientific scheme. It must contribute, purely as fiction, something to the understanding of man in the past that is attainable by no other means.

Insofar as history is necessarily an abstraction, the need for some supplementary treatment is clear. But since the chromatic treatment of Michelet, the pageantry of Macaulay, the synthetic cultural approach of professionals such as Ranke or inspired amateurs like Burckhardt, the case for fiction can no longer be sought either in vividness or in wealth of cultural detail, or even in a feeling of totality as against dry chronicles or abstract laws of development. The middle ground between history and fiction has been taken over by historians themselves.

Hence the writer of historical fiction must confine himself to explaining that in history which is unique in the action of man. He must pursue those variations in will and in sensibility which are induced by the historical process in the psyche and which would not have become evident in those forms were it not for the impact of external history. Otherwise his novel is merely a translation of present day psychology to the past, that is, a falsification. He faces a two-fold identification in this attempt: he must see his characters as they were, abstracted from a knowledge of the ultimate consequences of their acts, and yet he must impose a certain teleology in order to give their acts that significance which they could never wholly have apprehended. Nearly all historical novels, even the very best, collapse at one of these two points. For this reason they have been of a more juvenile order than the comparable fiction of their time.

Since the writer of historical fiction was not a spectator nor did he experience any of the sensations he describes, he is handicapped by the lack of immediate esthetic impact: he is working in a mirror. The intensity of daily experience is involved with an amazing multiplicity of unrecorded data; it follows, therefore, that most historical fiction is psychically pale, and that the novelists are compelled to resort to adventitious color to embellish the narrative. "Research" thus transpires through most of the labored pages.

Basically the psychic life of man in the past has two aspects. The first and most significant is the character of "leaps" in experience. The French peasant and lower middle class go on at a jog trot for most of the eighteenth century, suddenly from 1789 to 1795 they live more in six years than in a preceding century. The reaction of man to this sudden impetus is a legitimate subject for fiction, as is any heightening of the emotions in tragic circumstance. The second, and more pervasive form, is harder to describe. That is the daily response of the

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masses of men to an environment greatly different from our own. A scholar like Huizinga, for example, has recently shown us the inner life of man at the end of the Middle Ages so deftly and sensitively that one sees that the writer of fiction has to search more deeply than hitherto to justify his craft as against the historian. Hence the most significant contribution of historical fiction will have to be in those areas where a long accumulation of events has altered the character of history qualitatively so sharply that man must acquire new responses in order to cope with them.

What purpose can historical fiction, then, serve to the proletarian impulse? Not a didactic function, surely, since past events are, at best, merely analogical with present ones. It can best be defended on humanist grounds, that is, that a rising class does better when it has a more comprehensive view of the nature of man as he has experienced concrete difficulties. In this, while historical fiction is far secondary to the revelation contained in the masterpieces describing contemporary man, it grants vistas to the working class. As tradition has ever been a conservative stronghold, this is a contribution.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

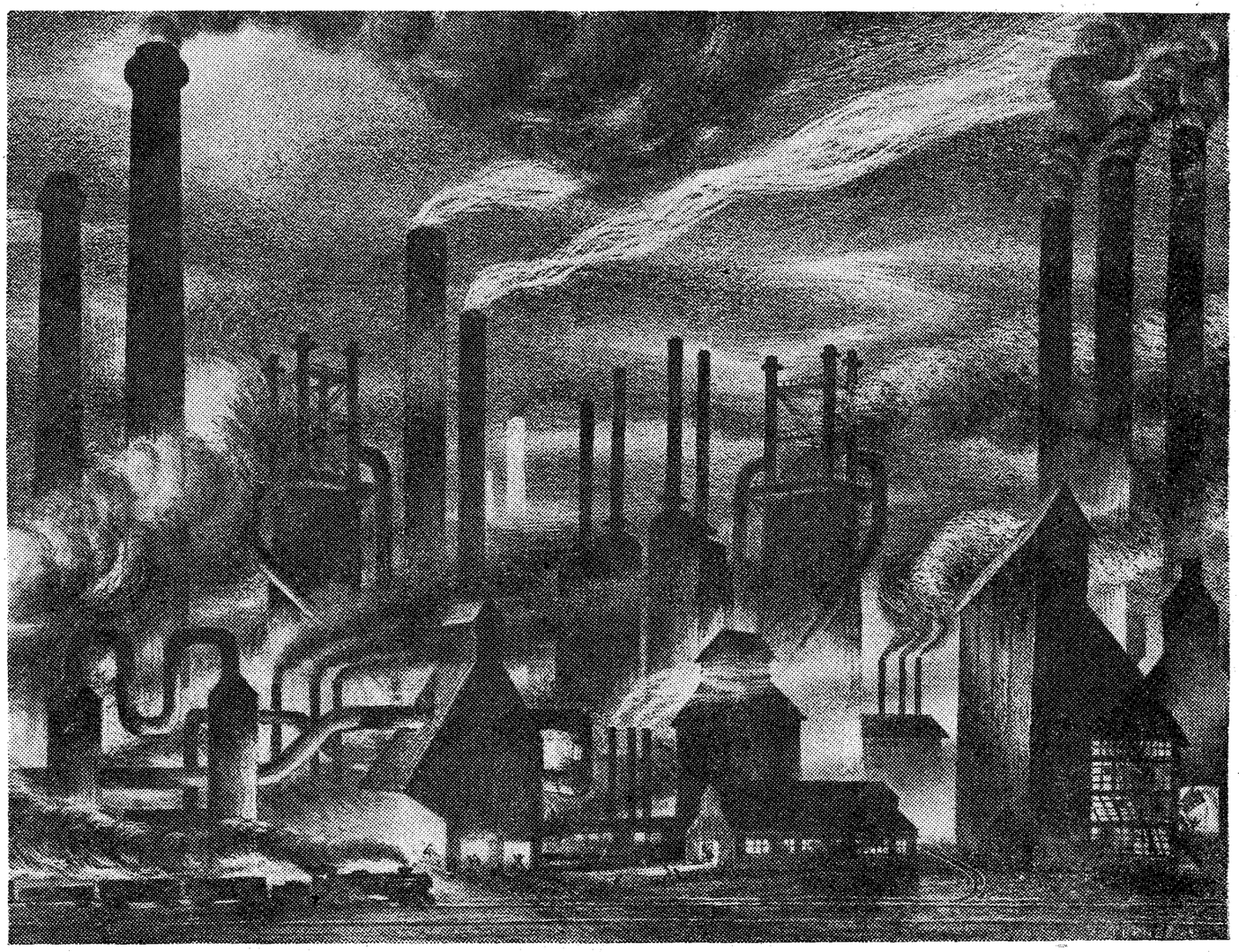
THE term "historical novel" is inherently clumsy; it yields one definition or another according to the place or time it is used. And of late—that is, during the 1930's—it was familiarly used to describe a massive, carelessly written, escapist tome.

You can take a score of such novels and blueprint them. The writer used a *broad canvas*, which meant that his characters scurried around like soul-sick rabbits. The writer did *extensive research*, which meant two or three hundred additional pages of top-heavy description. The writer took care that his characters should not talk like human beings, which gave the book a much sought after archaic flavor. The writer indulged his characters in *quests*, in *driving passions*, which took them across continents and spanned generations. In other words, retreating from the writers who sought to portray human beings, the historical novelist found a dusty closet which, since it contained dolls and puppets beyond number, became the perfect workshop for mediocrity and reaction.

Actually, departing from the successful publishing definition, what is a historical novel? Is it a matter of degree, a matter of approach, or a matter of chronology? Where does a novel cease to be just a novel and become a historical novel? Most people would not consider a novel about the early 1900's historical, yet it can no more be the result of a young writer's direct experience than a novel of the American Revolution. Is the related experience of one's father less historical than that of one's grandfather? Is there a date or a decade where and when the novel ceases to be a novel?

Frankly, I don't know the answer to any of this—and for my part I am all for chucking the name and conception of the *historical novel* into the wastebasket. I can't say why I write historical novels, because to me, nothing I write comes under that heading. I can give a long string of reasons why I don't write the kind of books that are pigeon-holed under that heading.

A novelist works with the most flexible and variable form in



"Forest of Flame," by Harry Sternberg

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all the arts: so broad a classification, indeed, that the novel, as a form, completely defies definition—and that is as it should be. Essentially the novelist works with human beings, and in some juxtaposition, he puts them between the covers of a book. Sooner or later, if he is to achieve any sort of competence, he discovers how to go about his trade.

I conceive of my own branch of the trade as story-telling. The stories I want to tell have a direct inter-relation—in that they all deal with the struggles of men for freedom. They are not historical studies and they are not political studies—they are stories about people. Some of the stories happened a long while ago, some a few generations past, some are happening today.

I make no effort to simulate the so-called "atmosphere" of an era; for in a subjective sense, "atmosphere" does not exist; people accept the world around them as part of their experience, and a writer who does not accept the world that surrounds his characters will almost immediately lose touch with reality. And people, regardless of their era, are essentially the same; the present in which they live has for them a matter-of-fact and not a "historical" importance.

Let me make a point of this through the analogy of translation. Books we read taken from the original French or Russian or German often come off as well in translation as in the original. They treat of a world as alien to many of us as certain eras of the past, yet the writer accepts that world, and thereby the reader accepts it. True, the reader is a stranger in the land; but through the writer's skill he becomes a sympathetic stranger; and if the writer is skillful enough, the reader subjectively partakes of that sameness and brotherhood which binds all men, whatever their time or race or condition.

There, in a sense, is a definition, if a rather vague one, of the books I write. They are outside my experience, but the people of America live in a tradition that remains constant. I am a part of my father, and he was a part of his. Speech changes slowly; and the forces that motivate men of good will change hardly at all. The people's wars we fought in the past were as hotly contested by traitors within as is the people's war of today. The charge of "Communist" was hurled at the Abolitionists during the 1850's and the 1860's, and the term "patriot," used seventy-five years earlier, was made, by the reactionaries, as inflammatory in its connotations.

As to why I write about the past—my books give answer. These great and splendid forgotten men did not live and die so that all they did might be traduced and falsified; they lived and fought and died so that we might inherit and use the things they built. And the same type of scoundrel as opposed them then oppose men of good will today. It all becomes one; and the great tradition we fight for today is the same tradition they sustained and handed down to us.

HOWARD FAST.

Henrietta Buckmaster is the author of "Let My People Go" and a forthcoming novel on the Southern anti-slavery underground. William Blake is the author of "The Copperheads," "The World Is Mine," "The Painter and the Lady," and other works. Howard Fast's novels include "Citizen Tom Paine," "The Unvanquished," and "Conceived in Liberty."

Three Poets

Eve Merriam, Edwin Rolfe, Genevieve Taggard

Esther

Had crashed the right part of town.
Could wear a different deep-cut gown
every night in the week.
Butlered, banqueted, butter-rich fed,
life was a silver serving dish,
Cinderella wish.

And midnight tolled no jeering pumpkin coach;
only personal maid unfolding the crepe de chine couch.
Golden slipper was merely one of many.
Munching on frilly bon-bon thrills,
mufflered in all-year mink:
could have refused to think.

Simple to turn your back on the pinch-penny past;
the dazzling improbable dream was daylight at last,
dark would never dawn again.
Regret, forget what went before,
lie, deny that early station,
your chapped hands humiliation.

Drive limousinely up to the old neighborhood,
Lady Bountiful bearing caviar baskets of food,
Brighten their cobweb corner.
Stay just a little while.
Let them stroke your shimmering coat,
touch sapphire at your throat.

Then grandly perfect your grammar of the perfect snob:
convince yourself all beggars like to rob,
the poor are naturally defiled,
you never were their kin,
but a royal child left at that lowly door
you need stoop to and scrub no more.

Gay their crying hands with a large and lavish banknote
(diminishing every month till it needs a microscope).
Let them shift for themselves,
you have more important demands
with your new family crest.
Besides, they always leave you depressed. . . .

That might have been your pattern: historic renegade,
up from the rank and file, stool-pigeon bought and paid:
except that under the heavy festooned robe, beneath the intricate
carved pin,
you wore your common conscience like a light and shining skin.

Jeremiah

Doomsday, they told him, always happens there.
Never here.

It is the stranger struggling beyond his green depth,
to us dry on the snug shore
his name is shruggingly unknown.
It is the tangled train wreck, mangling aeroplane crash,
but bodies had not really been alive:
none of them came from our part of town.

It is the volcano vomitous with violence,
but halfway round the world.
Theirs is a funny foreign-sounding speech.

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Sorry for them in a vague vast way,
but after all the disaster
is voided out of our reach.

Wartime mother holding
the cold black-bordered card:
we never met her boy.
Innocent stick-up victim,
anonymous middle-aged:
and dead as a toy.

Doomsday, they went on, is plague: we are all vaccinated.
It is the lurid lightning scar: our roofs are insulated.
Fire and flood, it is a definite fact, detour our neighborhood.

Doomsday, they continued, is dark; the growling storybook fiend,
while we are warm in bed, with light our family and friend.
Why if your prophecy were true it would mean The End
And . . . . !

Doomsday, they finished firmly, is impractical.
We don't approve of it at all.

Noah

It was no way to win friends.
Directly after "Good Morning!"
to point the finger of warning.

And at every evening party
curdling sweet cake, sweet tea
with sour "Wait and see."

Rich had so much to lose,
slept better if they denied
his threatened tower of tide.

Poor were too busy paying the rent.
"Very well, if it's true,
you tell us what to do."

Damn. Why must he be the one
to island them together
before the oceanweather?

He'd get no thanks for the icy deed.
Let some one else have the wintry pleasure,
he was all for lolling summer leisure.

It was ruining his health.
No one believed him anyway.
Why not enjoy the present sun-dry day?

His life was his own, not society's.
So many books he'd left unread,
so many private words unsaid;

he ought to explore his inner self,
sail beyond this public doubt
into the calm of "Private. Keep Out."

He could be ready in half an hour . . . !
Only needed a midget craft,
not this endless echoing raft

lumbering, loutish, and when it was filled
would smell to high heaven,
squealing noise would deafen;

there'd be bickerings worse than a chicken run.
Damp would stick at the doors.
Quarrels over the chores;

somebody dumb would fall overboard.
Nothing really to look forward to
but sore-throat chorus of Kachoo;

while his tiny canoe could slip out of sight,
wily, slyly he could embark
this private night in the private dark. . . .

What was it holding him public there?
Mind, heart, will? Something that small,
and ticking like a clock,
stupidly binding him to behemoth dock.

EVE MERRIAM.

Poems of Three Years

1.

Running from the shadow-coach, silent on the darkening
road, we remembered: Be careful;
recalled the always-dimmed headlights, the full halt—
nobody knew how long. All watches were forgotten
while scouts advanced for a mile,
returned, reported: All's well.
And in the huge bus we relaxed, whispered,
thinking: Now, *now* the beginning;
hastily passed the loaves of bread around,
tinned sardines, Gauloises, chocolates, cheese,
stuffed them in pockets; filled a few canteens
with wind, drew the stiff curtains down and,
choking, smoked—all forty-eight of us—
a final cigaret.

Then, two at a time, leaped the wide ditch,
sped cross-meadow, carefully climbed
the flank of a sharp ridge,
knowing already
what the word *enemy* means.

We counted heads in a hidden gully. All here.
Our driver whispered *Salud* and disappeared
whisper-humming *Le Marseillaise*. Our guide
greeted us: *Salud!* Gave us instructions in Catalan
which somebody translated into French, others
to English, German, Finnish, Italian.
None but a few understood the original words.
But all understood.

Of the long march through the vineyards there is little
to tell. The long single file advanced
silent through sleeping country, leaping ditches,
treading the worn earth, avoiding pits and twigs
ready to snap, betray us.
But we set the dogs to barking.
Wherever we went, there was the sharp alarm
of the watchdogs, yelping, howling, barking,
bursting the drowsy silence, giving alarm
to cowled sleepers of the countryside;
we could see them, almost: uneasy, turning
heavily, punchdrunk with sleep, raising
the thousand-ton head of sleep from the magnet pillow,
trying to listen—and failing,
falling again, eyes easily closed as
the sound of the dogs merged with their heavy dreams,
fused with the peaceful dark and, in the sky
seen through the peacetime window, the lone visible star.

Then, in the deep darkness, out of forbidding sky
the Pyrenees loomed, frightful, gigantic,
wonderfully to welcome us.

And the word went down our line like a snake's
body, coiling, undulating:
Stop now, rest.
We halted, gathered in a small warm gully
again. *Feet higher*, the order came—
Gets the blood out of them, eases them for climbing.

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"Paul Bunyan straightening out the Round River," by Milton Horn

Going toward what we hated, feeling no hatred,
only the *now, now* pounding
before it's too late in the brain,
we paused, nibbled at bread, cheese, chocolate,
cupped our cigarets' glow in careful palms,
stooped to drink at a spring, then stretched
bodies full on the thick grass,
resting
waiting
listening
searching the skies where
border patrols flashed rainbow beams
of light into the darkness; straining
eyes for distance, seeing much,
foreseeing more; wondering:
Will we make it? Will we make it?
No question of daring. The deed, begun, was done.
Now only the mountains faced us, the moon rising,
and only a shallow river in its dry summer bed.

Moving—the man ahead always in sight—thinking
this Spain we go to, this is no land of
postcard ruins, though we have seen them. This is
not what remains of half-remembered lectures:
bull fights, the matador suave in silks,
his mastodon enemy, buffalo-shouldered,
facing him. No land of flamenco,
or Rabbi Israel's son, courting the phobic maid
under a moonlit balcony far from Zaragoza.
No land of oranges, or olive groves,
or vines heavy with grapes in geometric vineyards.
Nor steel that sings and bends like a slim girl dancing,
nor gitanos and guitarristas—

no, none of these tourist dreams alone
is Spain.

Spain is
yesterday's Russia, yesterday's and tomorrow's
China, and the thirteen seaboard states
of 1776. Spain is all lands and all times when clash
the hopes and the wills of the men in them,
the kindliest, seeking only life,
and the cruellest, in love with death.

We were right; how right we never discovered
there in the midnight fields of slumbering France.

Madrid, September 1937

2.

On May 30, 1937, the small Spanish coastal steamship "Ciudad de Barcelona," carrying hundreds of international volunteers from France to Spain, was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Malgrat by an Italian submarine (which the far-sighted members of the Non-Intervention Committee preferred to designate as "of unknown nationality.") More than one hundred volunteers, at least twelve of them Americans, perished.

Nearing land, we heard the cry of gulls and
saw their shadows in sunlight on the topmost deck,
or coasting unconcerned on each wavecrest, they rested
after their scavenging, skidding the ship's length.

And we thought of the albatross—an old man going crazy,
his world a circle of blueness, none of it to drink;
and the vultures descending on an Ethiopian plain:
all of us were the living corpse, powerless, bleeding.

And suddenly the shock: we felt the ship shiver.
I turned to Oliver, saw his eyes widen,
stare past the high rails. My own eyes followed.
Others stumbled past us. And suddenly the explosion.

Men in twenty languages cried out to comrades
as the blast shook the ship. The water, like lava,
plunged through the hull, cracking metal before it,
splintering cabins, the sleepers caught unconscious.

Belted, we searched for companions but lost them
in turmoil of faces; swept toward the lifeboats,
and saw it was useless—too many were crowding them.
Oliver dove. I followed him, praying.

In the water the sea-swell hid for a moment
Oliver swimming, strongly, away from me.
Then his voice, calmly: "Here, keep his head above."
We helped save a drowning boy, kept him afloat until

dories approached. Looking backward we saw
the prow high in air, and Carlos, unconcerned,
throwing fresh belts to the tiring swimmers.
Steam, flame crept toward him, but he remained absorbed.

Reckless, magnificent, Carlos poised, outlined
against the blue Catalan sky, deceptive
and death-bringing here on the Mediterranean.
Incredible! Courage is too weak a word.

Then the prow straightened. Steam hissed for a moment.
And Carlos plunged downward with the plunging ship.

Madrid, September 1937

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3.

On shore, later, a hundred of us gone,
we are too weak to weep for them, to listen to
consoling words. We are too tired
to return the grave smiles of the rescuing people.
Too drained. Sorrow can never be enough.

But beyond the lethargy the vivid faces
of comrades burn in our brains: their songs
in quiet French villages, their American laughter
tug at responding muscles in our lips,
shout against ears that have heard their voices living.

Fingers, convulsive, form fists. Teeth
grate now, audibly. We stifle curses,
thought but unuttered. While many grieve
their hands reach outward, fingers extended—
the image automatic—anxious for rifles.

Until night brings us sleep and dreams
of violent death by drowning, dreams
of journey, slow advances through vineyards,
seeking cover in wheatfields, finding always
the fascist face behind the olive trees.

Madrid, September 1937

4.

One does not feel hatred,
loading the rifle, firing, reloading,
hearing the empty cartridge-shell clatter on stone;
one does not hate
the single visible enemy face two hundred meters away
(soon to be dead by my bullet).
One feels, not hatred,
only a terrible calm.

One hates
not those men sighting, getting their bead on you
(we might have been, perhaps are, brothers).
One hates
only the single beast-face of fascism.

It is a new feeling, never before felt,
to shoot men, taking careful aim
but not seeing them,
only the shadow behind them:
the brute face, the swastika
that guides their malignity,
that makes them intolerable,
less than human,
that makes them enemies.

Barcelona, September 1938

5.

You will remember, when the bombs
invade your softest midnight dream,
when terror flowing through your limbs
brings madness to your vulnerable room;

you will remember, when you stare at walls
familiar, patterned in a memorized
design, and watch the plaster as it falls,
abrupt, concussive—and you shrink back dazed

and all your body, that a moment past
was quiet, relaxed upon the comforting bed,
will stiffen, flex in fear; a host
of insane images will bring the dead

of many cities back to life again:
the dead you pleasantly ignored, and hid
from self and others; you will clutch the lone
solace of men who soon too will be dead

and count your sins, and know that they were crimes,
and curse your quiet, and respect, at last, these dead;
yes, you will remember—when the initial bombs
insanely fall into *your* life—Madrid.

Paris, December 1938

6.

To say *We were right* is not boastful,
or *We saw, when all others were blind*
or *We acted, while others ignored or uselessly wept.*

We have the right to say this
because in purest truth we can also record
We died, while others in cowardice lived on.

Just as the man is false who never says *I*
nor asserts his own deeds in pride, or disclaims his wrongs,
so too would we be less than truly men

if we did not now, to all the embattled world, proudly proclaim
We saw. We acted. Fought. Died. While others in cowardice slept.

New York, November 1939

EDWIN ROLFE.

Poet

Tragic meaning was my altitude.
Took it for mine, felt it lift
Very high, learned to live holding it behind diamond eyes,
In brain, in balance, let it eat at the vitals,
Seeing and willing events in crystal focus:
Large stars convening for nativity-eve.

Then saw the magnetic hope, and saw
Rays of power. From the saffron corpse of the tragic
Saw the new babe born, lusty, contorted.
Saw cohorts of cloud circling, dispersing,
Again circling; and space circling the perilous birth,
Until peril deepened, stained hope's country scarlet.

So refused the usual small role, knowing the nature,
The large terrain of the time. Since it is vision, since it is
Mine to say what it is, how quiet the eyes
Seeing, and the mouth open and saying:
This time, these people, the crisis hurrying
Near the defile of the evil story, this, soon and new:

Then dare to descend as by parachute, sheer
Drop down to place assigned, sheer down to fact.
Completely to relinquish vision and its piercing virtue.
Fall to the weight of one day with one life for gift.
Drawing the line from zenith to earth's tiny inches.
Suffer the limitation of beginning action. So on

Toiled in unit of slow going; in the line as it stops;
With stop after step, the signal awaited. One
In the lock with all, chained but never slave.
Here sweat out struggle nothing-sweeter than history.
Web of feet working over dark bloody ground.
Heart plunging neatly, spasm on spasm.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD.

Eve Merriam has written scripts for radio, has published in "Poetry" and "Story Magazine." Edwin Rolfe is the author of "To My Contemporaries," a volume of verse, and "The Lincoln Battalion." Genevieve Taggard is the author of "The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson" and several volumes of verse.

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Wartime County Fair

By Meridel Le Sueur

You can hear the roar as you approach the fair grounds which lie in the hollow of the valley with the lowlands stretching away to the truck gardens, to the wheat, oat, barley fields, and now to the munition plants which produce the grenades where corn once grew.

You can hear the roar amid the pennants flying and the bright wheels, merry-go-rounds, signs of speed and thrills, but above everything else you can hear the peculiar roar, singular among animals, like the roar of a mighty river that flows on unabated—the sound of the human voice congregated after work and harvest in one rich cacaphony of sound, blended with the call of beasts and cry of barkers, rising as it has risen here for a hundred years with the odor of weather, animals, and teeming turds and hay.

There are men and women at this year's war fair, marking the second year of conflict, who have lived on buffalo meat, fought with Indians, gone in one generation from the sod hut and the tar paper shanty, back to the sod hut, and whose sons now fly daily over the Germany from whence many of them fled the junker landlords in 1848. You can see now the flood, the energy of the people, both for life and to defend themselves against death, as they mull through the war exhibits before the giant guns.

The precise and patient energy that makes a country is shown in the exhibits of the farm and village women: the Democracy quilt has won the sweepstakes: the silhouette cutters, the fine drawnwork, the pies, cakes, all the handiwork that has in it the odors, good rich corn growing days of Main Streets, the smell of clover in the hot sun, needlework snatched up before supper, in the anxiety of waiting for a letter, by ruminating milky women. The skill, the craftsmanship, the undismayed spirit stands in the embowered mottoes made of corn kernels, of bunched wheat, flax and soy bean leaf. They say: We Can. We Will. We Must. United We Stand For Victory. Food Will Win The War And Write The Peace. A corn marching song is spelled out in corn kernels:

Millions of bushels we are bringing,
Our songs of corn march on,
Our feet will follow the furrows' lead
To raise the food our allies need.

The words "Freedom" and "The Common Man" spelled out in flax sheafs are not new to them. These words at one time stood with the North Star to all the

oppressed peoples of the old countries, calling them in the dark nights over a darker ocean. For half a century escaping the knout, the guillotine, the bastille, they poured into the free land settlements. This feeling for democracy has remained as persistent as grass and lively as gophers.

The Territorial Pioneers meet every year at the fair in the big log house, with the open fire and the trophies of their time. A farmer is there with his son who is on leave from the South Pacific. The old man said that this year along with the whole township, and even the bankers and merchants from the village, he went out to help with the haying. He is ninety and was one of Abraham Lincoln's volunteers in '61, enlisting in the First Minnesota that fought at Gettysburg—only a handful surviving. "We're short of hands this year," the old man says. "Just like my pappy in the Civil War, I got myself four sons in the war. I feel fit as a fiddle, aim to live this war out and it will be a great day. Well, it makes an old man like me important again—pretty good ridin' up there on the sulkey rake, linin' up the windrows and watchin' the young fry gather the stacks, and when it's all cocked you feel pretty good to be a part of the war." The son says he wouldn't miss the fair if he could help it.

There are huge world globes in the war building with minute maps of far places painted in bright colors. They are surrounded by people—women, farmers, young girls, of every nationality, Scandinavians, Norwegians, Finns, Croatians, Germans, Irish, Danish, English, Italian, of the many and various migrations that have made this country, who now speak of another time, their faces lifted to the unfamiliar map of the world:

"Look at those maps. Look at where John is. A right small spot on the Pacific."

"I got me two sons in the Air Corps."

"We been blowed out, burned out, tractored out but by gum we're still alive yet."

"I had a son lost at Bataan."

"Ninety from my town were lost there."

"Yes sir, it's a different time, a movin' time."

"We're movin' on. We're in it now. The world is gettin' smaller."

The women stand together looking at the maps, the buxom farm women, Norwegian, with their plaited hair, and the thin, tough-as-tumbleweed farmers' wives, and now the young strong girls—factory workers, learning to handle steel, one generation from the peasant. And coming on the endless children, clinging to the hurrying skirts, rooting themselves in the precarious flesh, hanging to rolling stones, tossed on the wave of courageous life that keeps thundering on.

There are few young men this year. The young girls are driving the trollies, manning the machines, spinning, weaving, shearing—witnesses to the vitality, the craftsmanship of the people, taking pride in the work of the hand.

Arousing also the sense of liberty in which they have never lost hope or belief. To walk in the fall glut of harvest, close to the flood of hip and breast, in the rich talk and discussion and new world of war, is to be with health, to see it in the strong body, to hear it in the flood sound of their feet, in the low talk with the jaw showing the intensity bred now—it is cheer to the heart and a terror to despots.

And "is liberty gone out of that place? No never!" Even the wonderful gyp of the Midway carnival now has lost its bite. What are lions on motorcycles with blondes riding them, two-headed ladies, rubber men, to a people who wait for news of lost sons in Bataan, Africa, Italy, who have now, daily, an experience so international, so strange it cannot exist in the heart alone? What are the naked ladies this year, and those who drive nails through their noses, whose skin stretches, in the face of a world

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"Farewell," by Raphael Soyer

whose global happenings beggar description? So also the gyp games, the rolling ball, dice, hoops, mice that run into colored holes, the corn game have lost their power of the gamble beside this colossal gamble of the world.

THE young men of these mothers, the sweethearts of these strong girls, missed at the dances, in the drug stores, on the Main Street corners, have turned up now on old ancestral paths, flying over the lands their fathers fled, landing in far countries not marked on the map, smashing geography, cancelling space. In these far places they remember New Prague, Minnesota Bohemian trading post, a little village founded by their Czechoslovakian fathers; they remember now in far places the white spires of churches rising in the black firs out of the snow. The Polish boys from Minnesota in the evening in North Africa yearn for Polish czernina made of duck blood, and wonder who brings the cattle in along the valley floor and when they will fly over free Poland. The letter from home said that the girls this year drove the tractors bringing in the heaping loads of golden hybrid corn from the mechanical picker, filling the huge cribs for the steers and the hogs they will fatten for the Army. Father said they worked harder this year and must keep on working, everyone helped bring in the crops, he said, it was like the old days when you had a house raising or a quilting bee and everyone came in to help you. It was good to know these things still lived.

The boys from the Icelandic settlements of Ghent and Minneota got letters from their mothers reminding them that Iceland fought a long war for freedom and had the oldest parliament in the world. The Danes from the rootabaga country took pictures of their loaded tables of vegetables to send to sons in New Guinea and the Hollanders say there are no young men this year to play rolly bolly — a game like horseshoes.

NOW young men think of the broad lands with nostalgia in a far country, remembering the river towns, pleasant cities, productive empire, now feeding the hoppers of war.

In the north on the Mesabi the Cornishmen, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Lithuanians, Italians, Finns work day and night breaking their own records in the pits, loading ore directly to the railroad cars to speed down the Merritts railway to the docks to drop it into giant hoppers and into the holds of waiting ships. Soldiers guard the mine shafts and the docks. Six hundred boys are gone from one small town. Such a proportion over the rest of America would provide a military force of twelve million.

These have a double fight. They remember two countries. The Finns hope Finland will withdraw its troops, join the Allies; many themselves fled Mannerheim and the reactionary landlords of Finland after the last war.

The timber workers make a plan to speed up their production, cooperating with the pulp mill owners: the unions organize the villages, cities for scrap drives, for Russian relief, for civilian defense. Windows in every village show the service flag with usually more than one star. Headlines in the newspapers tell the story of Midwest sons behind this war: "3RD MIDWEST ARMY JOINS '2ND FRONT,'" "FIRST ASHORE IS IRISHMAN FROM SOUTH DAKOTA," "MINNESOTA DIVISION IS 'GLORY GANG,' IN NORTH AFRICA."

AT THE fair, in rest rooms, on the lawns, women open and read their war letters to each other: men talk about their sons, leaning against the stalls of the giant Percherons or while combing the marcelled curls of the sleeping bulls: girls whisper to each other while resting on the grass in front of the grandstand waiting for the band to play and the children enact what they have heard from letters and brothers on furlough, shooting from behind trees, becoming lone heroes in the wintry sun, pretending the pigeons are enemies.

Words are repeated, a new poetry made, reasons are stated; there is the flavor of the broad common stock and the struggle and pride in it, the true anonymity of a world event fraternizing all speech. All great upheavals of the people are accompanied by much talk, new language, thoughts articulated for the first time, a man's lonely rumination becoming the communal cud:

"My brother says we live on the beach. He says everything is beach between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Is he ever nautical now!"

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"Marve is a guy who's got a lotta nerve and he likes to shoot and travel."

"He says, we're going to get this job done and get back home and you're the prettiest gal I've seen and we'll be married."

"I brought both kinds of music, he said when they landed, pointing to his rifle and his guitar."

"There is no color as far as I'm concerned in the future."

"When we was sinking the skipper wanted to go back for his false teeth."

"I said to my buddy when we was on that raft, I got a stronger stomach and can heave farther."

"As for the crew, I can' say too much. They were men."

"Sighted sub. Sank same."

"I will fight for the kind of life I want to live."

"To me a well rounded life means a home on the outskirts of a city, a wife, a couple of kids, a fireplace in the living room, a car and a garden."

"I don't mean a ten thousand a year job, just the necessities of life for everyone, a few simple luxuries, an occasional evening out and some fishing tackle."

"I fight, he says, in the hope of a new democracy, embodying the law of the common man."

"We have the tallest buildings, greatest cities, Main Street, the Yanks and Dodgers, movies, hot dogs, double malts, and colleges, this is what I am fighting for."

"I want to take week ends in the city, live in a small town. I want to be able to read the results of the world series again in the headlines instead of war."

"My first great purpose for fighting is to stop, push back, conquer and completely destroy the enemy."

"When this war is over I want to own a Black Morgan stallion, have two slack combinations and go to college."

"We have to fight now and fight fast."

"I fight for my friend Bob, killed by the Japs. We used to hunt and fish and race each other up and down the river in our canoes. They killed and tortured him."

So the talk goes on, low, laconic, with song, in low and high register; so solid growth rises from man more enduring than the stands of pine, cedar, and hemlock, broader than the prairie, and deeper than the ancient stands of iron ore and harder than the skull of the Mesabi.

EARLY one morning a boat was launched in the middle of a corn field, the high prow of an ocean-going navy tanker rising out of the flat country, and nosed into the cradled Hercules of the Mississippi: before the freeze sets in it will be safely below the frost line, headed down river to Orleans and the big drink.

The first boat was called the *Bataan* and moved through new locks, new connections, new canals. Man makes new portages into new worlds and never stops. The ships are nosed down a nine-foot channel to the Minnesota, into the Mississippi. The first one was launched with shipyard workers cheering from the shore. "'Mark twain," calls the man swinging the port lead line. "Quarter less twain," calls the starboard man as the boat noses through the shallow channel. "Twelve feet depth to port." "Two and a half feet here." She noses into the inside shore, swings around, clears, slides into the Mississippi, the lead song from the bridge, "Mark twain," and floats easily under the many bridges, down to St. Paul.

The prairie and the ocean now are one, another "impossible," has been accomplished, the long trek inward now turns out again, the circle is complete.

WE COME out of the sample air raid shelter, the long line that has filed in and out is silent. A hand tightens convulsively over another. The eye widens. The silence is full of wonder, of questioning of a future happening.

The screen doors of Main Street houses are opened softly at night and a man or a woman creeps out from the sleepers and looks up at the fall Pleiades asking where to? What now?

They can only be answered by the chemistry of their own courage, endurance, the everyday common doings, always asserting their high nature and originality: rising now, gathering speed and force, hurling again into far actions:

"I got a son in Italy now."

"Mine bombed the old country for the twentieth time hand running."

"He flies a fortress named *Tom Paine*."

"You can smell blood money the same as always but the taste of it has never been sweet to us."

"You got the blood suckers, lice of politics, same as usual but we know their faces, seen them too long."

"We've failed many times. We'll fail again but we'll keep on pitchin'."

"We got in us all the rivers we have crossed, the mountain ranges we have gone over, the real things past and present."

"It takes workers, carvers, stonecutters, riveters, pattern makers to hew out a nation. There are solid forms we can see to cut in the future."

"We have fought before this the wild boar of power and escaped the scaffold, gibbet, cannon ball, the knout, lash, and slavery many times and we will again."

"O saa vona me, manddommen varar at den aukar seg aar etter aar."

"And so I hope that our strength may endure and grow from year to year."

And again, at the time of harvest, in the second year of our participation in the war, there is the rich, precarious, human, a-hum and indestructible in the fall equinox.

MERIDEL LE SUEUR.

Meridel Le Sueur, midwestern writer, is the author of a number of short stories, including the collection "Salute to Spring."

"Letter from the Front," by Mervin Jules.

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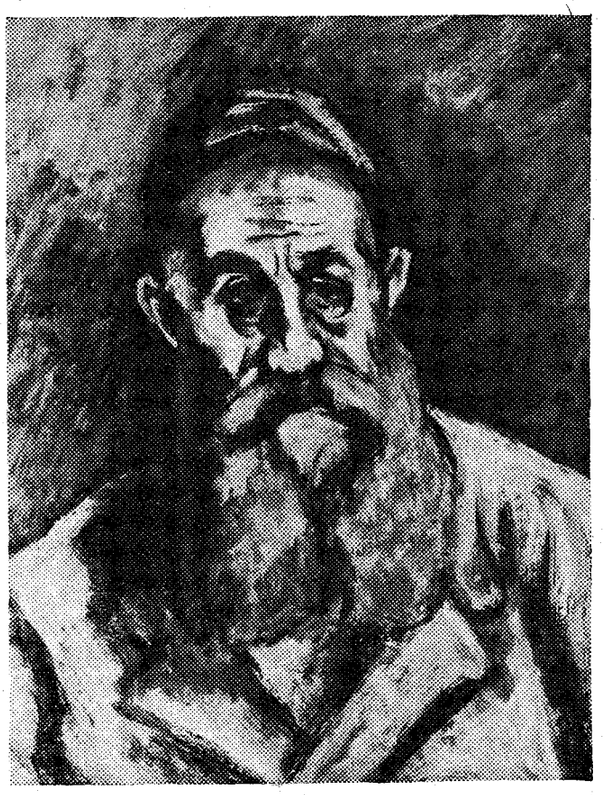
The Exiles

By Sol Funaroff

My people are as a people of grass,
uprooted and scattered,
fugitives of the earth.

They are a people of exile,
a people of all nations, yet forced apart,
homeless ones, wanderers in waste places,
refugees on a road of ruins,
refugees on a road of mourning.
In a world without refuge
desolation is their dwelling place.

They march—
on the long road of exile.
How their banners are fallen about them
like beggars' garments!
The sorrows of my people are rains
that fall on the sands of the desert
and are barren.



"Polish Jew," by Tromka

My people are a people of grass,
uprooted and scattered.
In a world without refuge
desolation is their dwelling place.

1. The Garden

I had a garden, a lovely garden,
a tribe of flowers in a garden of nations,
a people of many-colored grass.

I had a garden, an oasis,
a well of living waters,
a well of learning.

I gathered out the stones
and planted in the garden,
as a seed made bread
were the plants in the garden,
as a people of grass
grown up from the plains.

In a garden on a hilltop I kept my lodging.
The pillars of my house were of precious trees,
a tree of life, and a tree of peace,
a tree of life, and a tree of knowledge.

I had a garden, a lovely garden,
I nurtured with care each root, each branch,
flowers in the sun, words of gold,
a lily, a song,
rich fruits like poems,
golden scriptures like leaves of a story
of a tree of life, of a tree of knowledge
of a people of grass.

2. Song

I went down to the garden,
to the beds of spices,
to glean in the garden,
to gather the lilies.

I gathered the fruits
like ripened grain
and the granary is full.

My fruit is better than gold,
Wisdom has builded my house
and furnished my table,
"Come, eat of my bread,
and drink of my wine,
and walk with me in the way of understanding."

3.

They have come up from the plains,
they have come down from the mountains,
the many nations walk in the garden,
they feed among the lilies
like a flock among the lilies.

Their swords are ploughshares,
their spears are pruning hooks,
there is ploughing and planting,
there is pruning and paring,
they break forth into singing
and the nations rejoice.

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4. *The Desert*

The beast is in the garden,
The beast with claws of iron,
the beast with breath of fire,
the brown pestilence in the land.

The walls of the garden are fallen,
swine feed in the ruins,
The bark of the tree is leprous,
the tree of life is leprous,
the wise man is become a leper
and wisdom a disease.

The branches are slashed with swords,
the limbs are lopped with terror,
there is burning instead of beauty,
there is no green thing.

O people of grass,
you are as a heap of stubble,
a heap of refuse.
Beauty has fled your dwelling,
and desolation is your dwelling place.

The beast of nations lies down in the field,
the garden is a desolation,
a place for beasts to lie down in.

5. *The Road*

Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust.
Gather yourselves together,
gather together, O people not desired,
blow the trumpet.

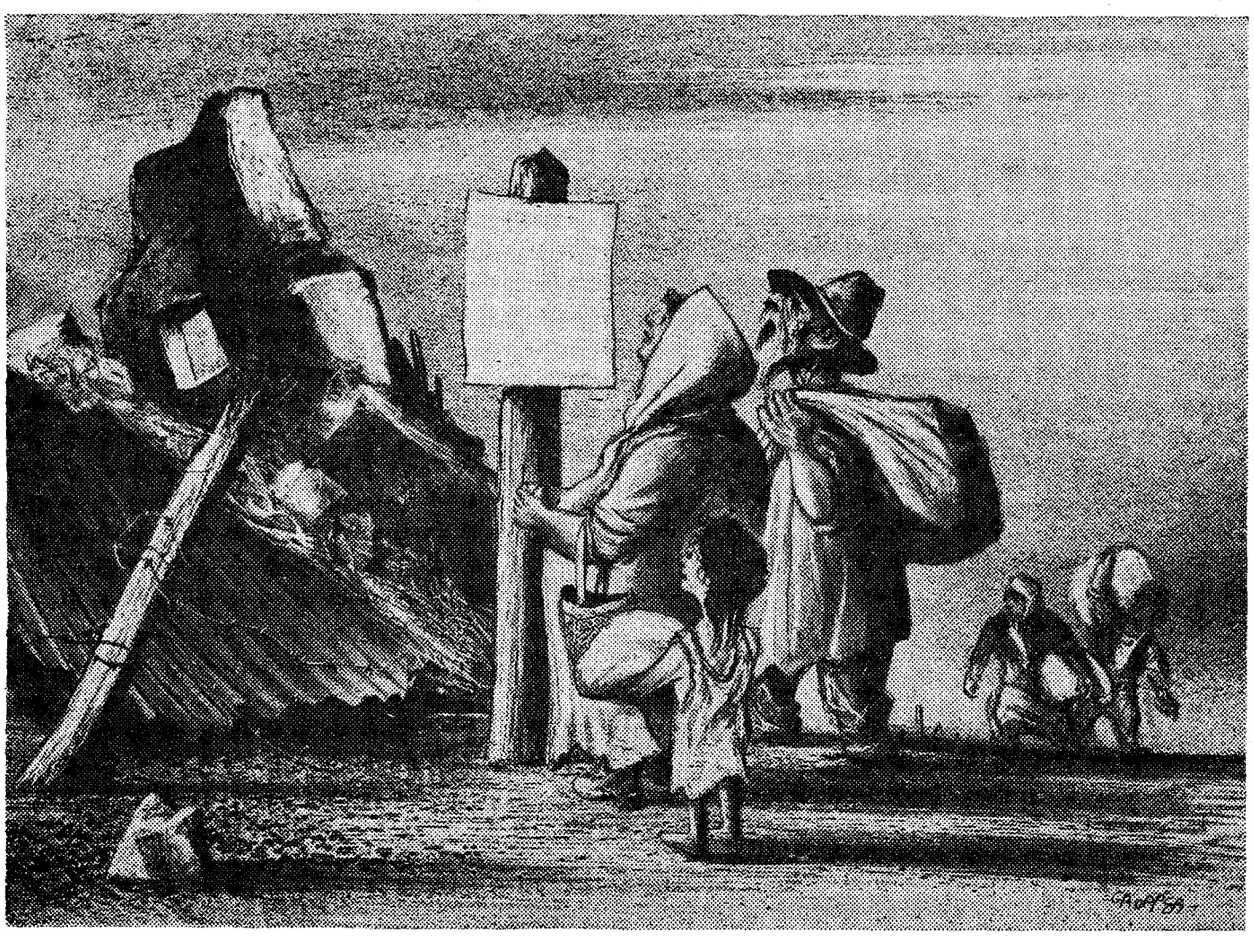
Blow the trumpet,
cry, gather yourselves and go,
gather yourselves in troops
against those who besiege you.

The brown beast shall perish,
the cities of his pestilence crumble,
you shall rise in the rust of their cities
as a people of grass,
as roots out of dry ground.

Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust,
take root in the earth,
O people of grass,
and rise again.
Awake and sing,
prepare the way of the people,
lift up a standard for the people.

Set up your banners,
O people of grass,
wave them in the fields,
gather in the hills,
roll in the valleys,
from the crevices of earth
go forward,
march.

Sol Funaroff, who died a year ago at thirty-one, was the author of "The Spider and the Clock." A posthumous volume of his verse has just been issued.



"Liberated Village," by William Gropper.

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New Characters for the Screen

By Robert Rossen

SEVERAL weeks ago I had lunch with a friend of mine—a very well known and successful screen writer. He is now an officer in the Army and has for the past year or so done nothing but training and indoctrination films. This man was known in the industry as the slickest of the slick and the quickest of the quick. His pictures were smooth, breezy, and entertaining—technically, they were beyond reproach. His characterizations were sharp—his dialogue easy on the ear. I can think of no one who could take the familiar and make you like it better than he could. He was the boy who wrote and talked like Forty-seventh Street and Broadway.

For several years there had been a good-natured feud between us—he had always accused me of being what he termed "a socially significant Joe," a writer who was trying to bat his head against a stone wall in a setup forever grooved a certain way.

Now, this man after a year in the Army, leaned over to me and said, "Rossen, you're a dead duck. After this war is over, writers who remain in Hollywood won't have a chance." I asked him what he meant. "It's simple," he said. "You think pictures are going to stay in a groove. Well they're not—they're going to change. If you think an audience is going to accept the kind of pap you screen writers have been dishing out—quick, slick, breezy stuff that's a carbon copy of every other picture ever made—you're crazy. If you think they're going to accept characters as phony as a quarter watch you're even crazier."

I asked him why he had changed his point of view. "I've been dealing with real stuff," he said. "When an actor sweats in one of our pictures, no makeup man sprays it on him—he really sweats. When I have to write a line of dialogue, which in pictures could never get past the gateman, let alone the Hays Office, I write it and the actor says it and the boys who sit and watch it love it—because it's real and because it's the way they speak and the way they act and the way they think. And so far as phony plot is concerned—well try and think of one to put into a picture of the operation of a tank or how to dig a foxhole."

"That," I said, "is a specialized kind of picture. After the war—"

He interrupted me. "After the war," he said, "these boys and their families are your audiences. Two things have happened to them. The first is that they've been dealing with too much reality to be taken in by what we think is reality. The second is that they've gotten to know more people than they ever knew before, and to know more about them; and what's more important, you can't sell them on the idea that you have to be a special kind of guy to be a hero; you know, the kind of heroes we've always been writing—handsome, tall and cool—special people. They will have seen too many ordinary people become heroes. And very few of them will be handsome, tall, and cool; they'll be all sizes and shapes and they won't be cool at all. They'll be mad and sweaty and dirty. And the gals they meet and know—they'll be different too. They'll have done stretches in war plants, in the Army, in the Navy—for the first time these gals won't be the little woman nobly sacrificing the boy to his career, or vice versa. There'll be a career for both of them and the question of giving up one for the other will be as old-fashioned as Aunt Harriet's hat. And it's these kinds of people that you're going to have to write about in pictures, whether it's comedy, drama, or cartoons—it's the kind of actors that look like these people that are going to pack them in."

He went on: "Take a trip to any Army camp. I've been to nearly all of them, including several overseas, and I've watched the boys and listened to them during and after a picture showing. This is what they want and this is what they're going to get—and if writers like *you*," and he pointed an accusing finger at me, "can't give it to them, writers like *me*," and he thumped his chest, "will." With that he got up and left, and I watched him go. This quick, slick, breezy boy, who a year ago had called me "socially significant Joe," and to tell you the truth I began to worry.

I HAVE been writing pictures for almost eight years. In those eight years I've had problems, just as we've all had, but none of them has ever been beyond solution. Now I find myself working on a picture that is, in a sense, the same kind of picture that I've written before. It's about the same people I've written of before, pretty much the same strata of society—people I've lived with most of my life. Specifically, it's a study of a certain section of American life that's been affected most by the impact of the war, a home front picture. And yet frankly, I've never had more difficulty in writing anything. I thought when I started this picture that I knew what it was I wanted to say about these people. But when I began to write it, I found that I could never really find the characters and situations that would illustrate it, at least so that an audience of today would believe or identify themselves with it. The story always kept going downhill—it had no finish, no pull in it, no one or nothing to root for. Then I tried all sorts of *technical* approaches, ways of telling the story, to pick it up. None of them worked.

In the past, most of us when we hit a situation like this called the research department and asked them to dig up all the material they could on a particular subject. Now, I think, something new is happening in this industry and will happen more and more. We're beginning to deal with subjects on which there is no research—it's all brand new material. And we're beginning to deal with characters for whom there are no precedents. For example, there were no women in war plants several years ago.

A writer is now forced to go out into the field for this material and the studios are forced to send him if they expect to get any kind of authenticity in their pictures—authenticity that goes beyond mere decoration.

HERE is what happened on this picture. I was forced to go out into the field actually to see and talk to the people about whom I was writing. After several weeks of this kind of research I think I discovered why the story couldn't come off, and the reason for it was that I hadn't recognized the change that had occurred in the characters I had been used to writing.

For instance, a sullen, bewildered little man who rebelled against society. Or a man who had been in the last war and who is convinced that everything is a racket and goes into bootlegging. For instance, the girl who wants nothing in life so much as one last fling, a trip to Havana with the villain, and then to settle down with the man she doesn't love. And, the old philosophical gent who sits on park benches or tenement roofs and spends several reels talking about the futility of life. All of these characters form a pattern. A pattern of despair and defeat.

And it isn't that these characters weren't true and didn't represent reality at a given time. It is that they are no longer true, and that their attitudes are no longer valid, for society has so changed them that they don't behave in the same patterns any more.

The man who used to be sullen and bewildered knows much more about what is going on and he's more and more convinced that he can handle whatever comes his way. He's no longer hopping freight trains or going from jail to jail and being classified as a vagrant. He's too important now. This country needs him. There's a place for him, and he has a sense of his own importance. He has pride now and

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courage and a belief that he and a lot of other people like him are going to work it out.

The man who's been in the last war is no longer a useless member of society who's forced to go into some sort of racket. The knowledge and skill that he gained are now of some use in this war—he, too, has found a place.

As for the girl, she can afford to pay for her own trip to Havana—if and when she can take it. And as far as the old, philosophical gent is concerned—he's working. The same, I'm sure, is true of people in all classes of society. They have, in a sense, come out of the bewilderment and confusion that beset them and are now taking an affirmative view.

Instead of a pattern of despair I found one of confidence and of hope. Instead of people turning their eyes away from the future they looked at it steadfastly and felt that it belonged to them. I'm not trying to be Pollyannaish about this. I'm not trying to say that all's lightness and sweet—what I'm trying to say is that people have found dignity, they've appraised its worth, and they'll live for it or die for it. And if you think these are words, talk to the waiter who used to bow and scrape; talk to a bus driver; talk to a guy who works in a plant; get a load of a kid of seventeen who's been sent to a forestry camp for juvenile delinquency; watch that kid when they give him a sense of participation in the war—fighting brush fires, picking the crops. Yes, go further, talk to the Okies whom Steinbeck wrote about in *Grapes of Wrath*—the bitter, sullen Okies, the defeated ones. I have. And it's old hat, my friends. They're working in war plants and they haven't got a sense of movin' on any more. They've got a sense of belonging, *wherever* they are, and a powerful sense of knowing that the dark days are over—the hopeless days. And that's what you get wherever you go—a feeling that things are going to be right, a faith, a belief, a hope.

LEARNING this point of view not only changed my point of view on the characters. That change made me write a different kind of story—that change made me find different situations. What started out to be an expose story of corrupt, evil forces crushing men and women turned out to be a story of a group of people who were going to win despite any condition. Instead of a negative, downhill story, I found myself with a story that was positive, that raced along, uphill—a story with all the qualities of what we've come to know as good entertainment, a story with a pull, someone to root for. And that's always been a good story, hasn't it? Even the form was a cinch. It could only be told a certain way, the simple way.

I'm not trying to say that this story is going to set the world on fire. That's beside the point. What I'm trying to show is how a point of view on character can change both story and form—why I think this particular point of view is right is because I believe that's the way people are today. And I think the facts, objective facts about the American scene today, justify that belief.

However, I don't think it's enough just to know that people are different. You can read about that in a book. What I think is important for the writer is to understand *why* people are different. And I think that when the writer begins to understand this he has the key to the whole problem, not in terms of politics, but in terms of his own craft, in terms of making himself a better writer. And he must be a better writer because only through this understanding is he able to articulate what people are really thinking and feeling, and if he is able to do this, then he is that much closer to his audience.

I think our greatest difficulty as writers up to now has been to get ourselves to believe that this change has really occurred. We've been so steeped in the cynicism of the last twenty years that we find it hard to think of characters such as the ones I've been talking about in any other terms but people who must be crushed by destructive social forces.

We're still thinking in terms of the last war and not in terms of this war. We're still afraid of being betrayed and that fear goes deep. We've been sick, and this has reflected itself in everything that's been written in the last twenty years. Our stories have been stories of frustration, of defeat—our characters have always gone down to their doom. Our historical approach to stories of America has been the debunking one—all our heroes had feet of clay, and if they didn't they weren't worth writing about.

Well, the average man sees and feels the basic difference between this and the last war, and we can't write him unless we see with him and feel and believe with him.

Right here in this town, in Hollywood, I've heard writers say, when Hitler first over-ran France and the low countries, that the machine had finally triumphed and that since Hitler controlled the machines of destruction, the people, even though they wanted to resist, had absolutely no chance, and that they would accept this as a reality and submit to their fate. But the people did resist and the lie was given to this theory by history. They resisted so well that the part that their resistance played is paying off right now in the terms of our coming victory. And out of this resistance a new kind of hero was born. This hero has been around for a long time—he was in China, in Spain, in France, in Yugoslavia, in Russia, in all the countries of the world where free men wouldn't bend their necks. He's a hero, in America, and he's been here for a long time, too. He's all over, waiting for us to write him, and if we are to survive as writers, if we're not to be what my friend calls "dead pigeons," we've got to put this hero on the screen.

"Street in South Brooklyn," by Tromka.

Robert Rossen, author of the screen play "Edge of Darkness," took a prominent part in the recent Congress of Writers in Los Angeles. This article is based on a paper read at the Congress.

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The Communists Look Ahead

By the Editors

THE decisions made by the national committee of the Communist Party during the past weekend are among the most important in its entire history. They are important not only for the party, but for America. They are an example of creative Marxism and constructive Americanism without parallel in any other political organization. They will need to be pondered and studied, thought through in all their bold implications by all who wish to play their part intelligently in the great tasks that lie ahead for our country and the world.

For the full presentation of the Party's views we refer our readers to Earl Browder's report to the national committee meeting, which is being published in the January 16 issue of *The Worker* and will also appear in pamphlet form. The most essential ideas in that report were also contained in Mr. Browder's speech at Madison Square Garden last Monday at a meeting observing the twentieth birthday of the *Daily Worker* and the twentieth anniversary of Lenin's death. The report and the speech mark a new level of achievement for Mr. Browder. They are a brilliant example of Marxist thinking, rich and subtle, yet at the same time simple and clear and down to earth. We must leave for a later issue a full discussion of the significance of the Communist proposals. We can here touch only briefly on the central ideas of the Garden speech.

The Teheran conference, Mr. Browder said, gave unequivocal answers to two questions: whether the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain would join in full coalition warfare to assure the quickest victory, and whether the coalition would hold together after the war to solve the problems of peace. He pointed out that the motive for agreement in the postwar period is as strong as the motive for agreement on the war, for "without a coalition peace the alternative is the spread of civil wars over vast areas, culminating finally and inevitably in a new world war between nations."

This joint over-all agreement "carried with it the duty jointly to exert all influence to minimize and if possible to eliminate the use of violent struggle for the settlement of inner problems, except in the defeat of the Axis forces and their quislings. A broad, all-inclusive democratic camp must be established in each country, within which all relations are determined and problems settled by free discussion, free political association, and universal suffrage. Such a democratic camp of necessity must include the Communists. . . . The only alternative is international anarchy." And Mr. Browder emphasized "the supreme responsibility to work now for such policies within the country as will lead toward, and give realistic promise of, *the continuation of national unity into the postwar period for a long term of years.*"

What about the question of socialism after the war? "It is my considered judgment," Mr. Browder said, "that the American people are so ill-prepared, subjectively, for any deep-going change in the direction of socialism that postwar plans with such an aim would not unite the nation, but would further divide it. And they would divide and weaken precisely the democratic camp, while they would unite and strengthen the most reactionary forces in the country. . . . If the national unity of the war period is to be extended and even strengthened in the postwar period, then we must recognize that in the United States this requires from the Marxists the reaffirmation of our wartime policy that we will not raise the issue of socialism in such a form and manner as to endanger or weaken that national unity."

Within this broad framework Mr. Browder considered the question of a postwar economic program. "Marxists," he stated, "will not help the reactionaries by opposing the slogan of 'free enterprise' with any form of counter-slogan. If anyone wishes to describe the existing system of capitalism in the United States as 'free enterprise' that is all right with us, and we frankly declare that we are ready to cooperate in making this capitalism work effectively in the postwar period with the least possible burdens upon the people. . . . The policy of supporters of Teheran must be to seek and facilitate support from all classes and groups, with the working people as the main base, from the big bourgeoisie to the Communists."

Mr. Browder then discussed what he called "an *approach* to the common path of dealing with economic problems," an approach based on the unity of all classes and groups. The two most decisive groups, big business and the working classes—organized labor and the farmer—are agreed on the necessity of keeping the productive plant operating in peacetime at approximately the level that has been attained in war. This will require an expansion of markets both abroad and at home. "The Teheran conference for the first time gave a realistic perspective of the quick organization of such huge foreign markets. Such huge foreign markets are unthinkable except under stable conditions, free from international or civil wars of major proportions." Though "most capitalist circles are vehemently opposed to large-scale government intervention in economic matters," they are ready to agree that government cooperation is indispensable in the sphere of foreign trade. It is in regard to the domestic market, whose buying capacity must be doubled, that real differences arise. Mr. Browder suggested that, rather than the Communists giving the answers, the capitalists themselves, who must keep their plants operating, make practical proposals as to how it can be done.

Condemning all strikes, Mr. Browder urged a review of the whole subject of wage policy by the administration "and elimination of the rigid freezing technique and clumsy case-to-case adjustments." He called for the strengthening of labor's political activity "to guarantee the continuation of Roosevelt's policies in the 1944 elections and to change the political complexion of Congress to make it a help instead of a hindrance in winning the war and establishing a stable peace."

FINALLY, the question of the Communist Party. In the light of the new perspectives and new tasks opened up by Teheran, "the Communist organization will be in a long-term alliance with forces much larger than itself," and as a rule will not be operating as a party in the American sense, that is, with its own candidates. The party's national committee therefore proposes that the Communist organization in this country "adjust its name to correspond more exactly to the American political tradition and its own practical political role" by dropping the word "party" from its name and adopting something like, for example, American Communist Political Association. This proposal will be acted on by the Party's national convention in May.

Mr. Browder made clear, however, that the Communist organization was not joining or endorsing the Democratic or Republican Party, though individual Communists might register in any party which their community activity might indicate. "If we are identifying ourselves with any general big political grouping in the country, then it is with the democratic-progressive movement within all parties, and we can say we are joining ourselves with the great body of independent voters."

This is the bare bones. We urge our readers to acquaint themselves with the pulsating flesh and blood in the full text of Mr. Browder's historic report.

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NM SPOTLIGHT

Let Congress Know

THE nation—nay, the entire world—has its eyes on Washington today as Congress resumes business. As we go to press the President has not yet delivered his State of the Union message, but the crucial issues, the most vital of our times, are well known to the people. Heading the agenda is a catalogue of questions concerning which the nation has minced no words. These include: the soldier's vote, subsidies, the anti-poll tax measure, proper taxation provisions. Wrapped in these questions lies the implementation of the historic Teheran decisions, and the people know it.

Nearest, perhaps, to the nation's heart is the soldier's vote issue. The families of eleven million soldiers, the soldiers themselves, want the franchise. But unfortunately, too many congressmen plot otherwise. Clearly, federal administration is imperative; anything short of that merely saves face for the poll-taxers and those who seek partisan advantage by depriving the armed services of the ballot. The only bill now before Congress providing adequate machinery for the soldier vote is HR 3895, introduced by Representative Scanlon, of Pennsylvania, last month. The nation must see to it that the Scanlon soldier vote bill is reported out of committee to the House of Representatives. Otherwise the flurry of "compromise" bills, evoking the spurious "states' rights" issues, will so confuse the question that something may be passed tantamount to the original Rankin bill, which denied the armed forces the franchise and which the Senate okayed.

Co-equal in importance with this issue is the subsidy question. We have nothing further to add to what we have written, except this: since Congress adjourned the people have spoken out in unmistakable terms. Chester Bowles, price administrator, reflected national sentiment when he said that Congress will be solely responsible for whatever harm will result if the subsidy program is not retained. The nation requires, demands, an adequate wartime stabilization program. For this reason it has its eyes on the next big problem confronting Congress: the question of taxation. Randolph Paul, treasury counsel, talked for the overwhelming millions when he denounced the tax bill that was revised by the Senate Finance Committee, as "a measure to appropriate public funds for 'relief' of war profiteers and others." Indubitably the only solution is the further taxation of corporation profits and the elimination from the measure of all provisions that weaken the renegotiation act.

Space does not permit a fuller discussion of the many other vital questions before Congress; however, we wish here to highlight one other that demands immediate answer. And that is the anti-poll tax bill. Our readers are well acquainted with the crucial importance of this measure, as is the country generally. Yet it stands in danger of being filibustered to death. That menace, like others mentioned here, must be surmounted by the united pressure of the people. Many blocs, particularly labor, have spoken out; the times demand the unification of these blocs and their concerted effort to help Congress see the light. Victory in the war and the postwar era lie in the balance.

Cheers to Chaos

FROM all sectors of the Eastern Front the news is extraordinarily good. The Germans are being pounded, sliced thick and thin, put through mashers until there is every reason to believe that they are finally being hurled out of the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht in the south is melting like snow under a hot sun. Small wonder then that back in Berlin hysteria reigns with the "official spokesmen" mournfully informing listeners that chaos has struck the supermen. Yet it should be borne in mind that in the southern area great, spontaneous capitulations such as that at Stalingrad are not likely. To be sure, many prisoners are being taken every day. Colossal booty is falling to the Red Army. Nevertheless, some German troops are escaping through Zhmerinka and others will escape along the awful highways and railroads of Bessarabia and Rumania. The jubilant fact, however, is that certainly more than half of the great German southern concentration will never see Germany again. Perhaps the greatest battle of annihilation in history is under way at this moment between the Dnieper and the Dniester.

Operationally speaking, what is most amazing is the ability of the Red Army to increase its pressure steadily in the fast expanding Kiev bulge which is now almost the size of Hungary. It must be remembered, too, that in the south the ground is not frozen solid. There still are rains and thaws. The marshes do not freeze over completely. The rivers south of the Pripet area are not wide but they are fringed with deep marshes and are sometimes more difficult to cross than a wide, clear water barrier.

The Red Army is now close to a hundred miles from its organized railheads. The Kiev bottleneck is still there to cause congestion. Furthermore, the bulk of materiel has to come from way east in the Urals. The Germans, on the other hand, are now closer to their centers of supply than the Russians. But in spite of that the battle of materiel is moving clearly against the Nazis. Their counterattacks are floundering under withering Soviet artillery fire. This means that an amazingly strong and steady flow of shells and other supplies is being maintained over long and difficult lines of communication.

Tactically speaking, the Red Army is using the pincer method to reduce the German strong points and defense bases. Practically all description of battles mention tank and cavalry blows dealt "from the west, southwest, and northwest" of such and such a place. All this means is that Soviet mobile forces penetrate to the rear of a German-held city and then attack simultaneously with the infantry which storms the place frontally. It may be said that the most remarkable large-scale operation in military annals is developing on the southern wing of the German-Soviet Front. This operation spells disaster for the German army there. Of this there can be little doubt.

For a Strong Poland

AS THE Red Armies of the Soviet Union drive westward toward the Polish Border the Polish government-in-exile is becoming downright hysterical in its anxiety to preserve the country it misrepresents, for feudalism and fascism. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, premier of that government, is supposedly on his way westward too, not, however, for the purpose of aiding in the liberation of Poland, but to try to exploit the border issue to bring division between the United States and USSR. We trust that Washington will accord him the coldest possible reception. In a recent interview in London Mikolajczyk announced that his

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government would cooperate "with the Russians when they reach Poland" but only on condition that "complications arising from demands to certain Polish territories could be removed." At the same time other Polish agencies under the control of the government-in-exile reactionaries let it be known that London and Washington had been asked to intercede with the Soviet Union on the border issue and directly threatened the use of such Polish underground forces as they can influence against the Red Army.

In sharp and welcome contrast to the fascist drivel of the government-in-exile is the five-point program put forward by the Union of Polish Patriots, an organization of Polish democratic leaders living in the Soviet Union. They call for a parliamentary, democratic government on the model of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia; the elimination of all reactionary elements and the breakup of feudal landholdings; unification of all Polish political groups with the exception of "reactionary emigre elements abroad"; friendly relations with the Soviet Union and recognition of the western Ukraine and western Byelorussia as part of the Soviet Union; and a westward extension of Poland's frontiers to include the predominently Polish areas of East Prussia and the industrialized, German-held Silesia.

(As we go to press the Soviet government has announced its proposals for the settlement of the so-called Polish "border issue." What is especially distinctive about the Moscow declaration—which we will discuss at length next week—is that it again expresses a deep desire to see Poland strong, free and independent. This is nothing particularly new. The USSR's position, despite the New York *Times* and Wendell Willkie, has been apparent for many months from Soviet commentaries and from a pronouncement made by Premier Stalin last May. It is also clear that the Soviet government does not consider the 1939 frontier as permanent and in fact suggests that it be altered in Poland's favor so that areas in which Poles predominate be returned to Poland. Whatever corrections are made should approximate the Curzon Line adopted by the Allied powers in 1919.)

Sobs for Seditionists

MILLIONS throughout the nation welcomed the Department of Justice action indicting the thirty seditionists on the out-and-out charge of conspiracy with "the Nazi party and its leaders." It was long overdue, but it is immeasurably better late than never. It will undoubtedly have a chilling effect on many bush-league fascists who aspire to the big time so long as the threat of federal punishment does not hang over them. But what about those who lay the basis for the Dillings and the McWilliams'? What about the cabal of defeatists in Congress who all too often make sections of the *Congressional Record* sound as though Dr. Goebbels had a hand in it? What about Hearst, Patterson, McCormick?

The added charge of working directly with the Nazi leaders, absent in the previous indictment of twenty-two of the seditionists, may have made the average reader's blood run cold but did not prevent the Chicago *Tribune* from again pleading the traitors' case. Colonel McCormick reserved his arrows for the Justice Department which had the temerity to proceed with further investigations and indictments after *Tribune* congressional stooges and defeatist senators protested. He contends that "the citizen who is not horrified and outraged by the government's conduct" doesn't believe in liberty. His paper carries a thinly-veiled appeal for defense funds, describing the indicted fascists as "people of small means . . ." who will need volunteer subscriptions to fight the government charges.

We hope that this time there will be maximum speed in the prosecution of the culprits. The fascists have had free play all too long. Events in New York, in Boston, Detroit, and in many other parts of the country have reached the explosion point precisely because of their continued propaganda and activities. The delay has been perilous, precious time has been lost. The federal dragnet must sweep boldly, vigorously, catching up all those still doing their dirty work; it must, most definitely, include the big fry still untouched. To neglect the source stream of treason is to procrastinate with that measure most necessary for our country's safety—the utter obliteration from the national scene of those who do Hitler's work.

Cartels and the War

THE anti-trust action begun by the Department of Justice against the British Imperial Chemical Industries, and E. I. du Pont de Nemours Co. and Remington Arms Co. poses problems both for the war and the postwar periods. International cartels are the offspring of domestic monopoly. In his classic work, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin cited "the division of the world among the international trusts" as one of the five decisive features of imperialism. Because monopoly is a historically conditioned and inevitable phenomenon NEW MASSES has always considered trust-busting and cartel busting utopian efforts to return to a vanished era. Only a fundamental social transformation, for which the United States and most other countries are not yet ready, can eliminate privately owned monopoly.

But to say this is not to say that the trusts and cartels must in all things have their way irrespective of national interest. Specific monopolistic abuses can be curbed by government action and the pressure of public opinion. At the same time, since the abolition of monopoly as such is not and cannot be the issue, it seems to us that all prosecutions under the anti-trust laws ought to be guided by the larger consideration of strengthening the war effort and aiding in the reconstruction of the postwar world in the light of the Moscow and Teheran decisions.

From the facts revealed by Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge it appears that in tackling the huge American-British chemical combine the government has struck at one of the economic sources of pro-Nazi appeasement in the pre-war period and of defeatism and opposition to the Teheran perspective today. The third partner of this international plunderbund was the German *Dynamit Aktiengesellschaft*, a subsidiary of the *I. G. Farbenindustrie*, which, as the Truman committee hearing revealed in 1942, also had collusive agreements with Standard Oil that deprived this country of valuable synthetic rubber patents. As for the du Ponts, the reactionary role they have played in American life during the past ten years is only the obverse of the policies they have pursued, together with their Nazi and pro-Nazi British friends, in the international sphere. An example of the cynical contempt of this crowd for law and morality is a letter quoted by Mr. Berge which Lammot du Pont wrote in 1933 to Lord McGowan, head of Imperial Chemical Industries, expressing confidence that the British-American cartel would be able to get around any legislation or international agreements. This is the same Lammot du Pont who has been the guiding spirit of the reactionary cabal in the National Association of Manufacturers in their vendetta against the war policies of President Roosevelt.

By itself anti-trust action cannot cope with the problems of monopoly in the postwar world. Positive action will be required, not to outlaw all economic agreements among industrialists of various countries, but to bring them in line with the Teheran program and make them an instrument for fulfilling that program in the reconstruction of Europe and Asia. This will of course be fought tooth and nail by the du Ponts and their kind, but there is reason to believe that in this battle the American people will not lack allies in the ranks of big business itself—leading capitalists who are intelligent enough to know that their real interests lie in working with history, not against it.

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WATCH ON THE POTOMAC by BRUCE MINTON

Look Who's for Labor!

Washington.

THE much discussed "anonymous statement" by a high military authority denouncing strikes because stoppages would delay victory, encourage Axis satellites to continue resistance, and swell casualties during the coming invasion, has been attributed to Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the US Army. There seems no doubt that General Marshall held the off-the-record press conference. There is also no reason to believe that the conference was carefully planned in advance or that the general's words were inspired by this high personage or that.

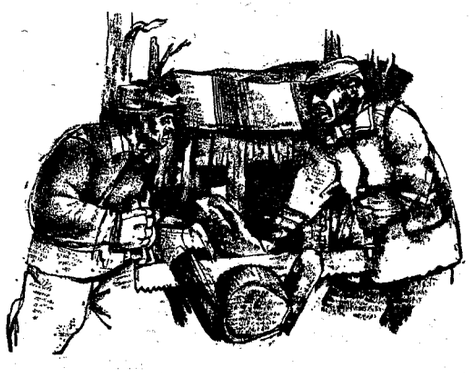
For some time now, General Marshall has been in the habit of providing certain reporters and columnists with "background material" designed to aid them in interpreting the news more intelligently. Those present at the regrettable New Year's eve interview have privately described the session as beginning mildly enough. In the middle of it, the story goes, the general grew angry when he referred to the railroad wage dispute, and he failed to consider too carefully the wording of his remarks. He is said at the termination of the interview to have consulted with Major General Searles, head of Army publicity, as to whether his views should be made public. It was decided to allow the newspapermen to use the material so long as the source remained anonymous.

This was a mistake, as most people are now inclined to agree. It was not so much General Marshall's mistake as it was poor judgment on the part of General Searles, who should have foreseen the misuse to which the statement would be put by the defeatists and the disrupters.

To those who have managed to keep their heads since the statement was released; to those who have recognized that the uproar greeting the "anonymous remarks" was largely manufactured by the anti-labor and anti-Teheran die-hards, the incident does not appear world shaking. Actually, General Marshall was expressing concern over home-front difficulties on the eve of the European invasion. The effect was undoubtedly not what he hoped it would be. Judged by the imperative need at this crucial moment to realize maximum national unity for the supreme effort against the Axis, the statement fell short of the mark and offered the disrupters an opportunity to spread confusion. The McCormick-Patterson-Hearst newspapers jumped at the chance to drive a wedge between labor and the administration, between labor and the Army's high command. Regrettably, William Green of the AFL and D. B. Robertson of the Locomotive Firemen, along with a few other spokesmen of the Railroad Brotherhoods, rose to the bait by issuing a series of conflicting statements. To his great credit, President Philip Murray of the CIO kept cool and calmly telegraphed to Donald Nelson, chairman of the War Production Board (a copy of the wire went to General Marshall) that when all is said and done, the steelworkers had produced "more than 90,000,000 tons of steel" this past year, and, Mr. Murray added, "we now, at the beginning of 1944, assure you that we are prepared to help break the world's record of 1943."

THE crop of outraged "defenders" of labor coming forward to protect the unions against General Marshall would be good for a macabre laugh were not their intent so transparently venal. When Walter Trohan of the Chicago *Tribune*, when Rep. Paul W. Shafer of Michigan, Sen. Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado, and Sen. Burton K. Wheeler of Montana pose as the "working man's friend," something has gone haywire. The men who have done most to delay the fullest prosecution of the war, who never overlook the chance to fight against labor's most elementary rights, suddenly bleat their indignation, hoping to needle the unions into berating the Chief of Staff and the administration. The same gang rushed into print in praise of John L. Lewis when he betrayed the coal miners and declared war on the nation.

As quoted in the press, General Marshall condemned strikes. Labor itself has condemned strikes during the war period. Stoppages can bring no benefits to the workers; they can only aid the Axis and comfort the enemies of the war on the home front. General Marshall was absolutely right in saying that strikes and threats of strikes prolong the war and increase the cost in human life. Where the Chief of Staff erred was in putting the onus for the work stoppages that have occurred on the labor movement alone and in ignoring labor's remarkable record (always excepting John L. Lewis) in fulfilling the no-strike pledge. As I pointed out in this column last week, the Little Steel formula has been twisted out of all recognition by mechanistic interpretations. The formula originally expressed a relationship between wages and prices. This relationship has not been maintained. Yet labor has been straitjacketed within the fifteen percent wage ruling as though this arbitrary figure were the essence of the formula. In addition, Congress has refused to tax big profits or to pass an equitable tax program. It has failed to authorize subsidies, without which price control is impossible. It has balked at limiting salaries to $25,000 a year, as the President urged. It has approved over the President's veto the outrageous—and ridiculous—Smith-Connally act openly designed to maim the unions. The reactionaries now revive agitation for a preposterously conceived national service act, again anti-union in conception and purpose. Labor has been the object of continual and calculated provocation from the disrupters who have managed to gain the upper hand in Congress, while President Roosevelt's demand that the economy be stabilized has been arrogantly ignored.



The answer to the furore over the "anonymous remarks" can only be to resist with all energy the defeatists' attempts to magnify the incident out of all proportion and thereby weaken the war effort. The task before labor, and before every member of the win-the-war majority, remains the same as it was the day before General Marshall spoke: Congress, about to convene, must be forced to stabilize the economy; wages must be equalized to the cost of living; the Little Steel formula must be made to work—which is only another way of saying that the President's seven-point program must be realized in full. Subsidies, an honest and workable tax program, preservation of the provisions regulating the renegotiation of war contracts, along with passage of the soldiers' vote bill without strings attached, and the approval of such key legislation as the anti-poll tax bill—such is the task that must be accomplished to strengthen the Commander-in-Chief and General Marshall in the impending military campaign.

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Poetry: Red-baiting Victim

By Isidor Schneider

A POWERFUL mood for change marked the first years of the century in America. It culminated in the 1912 presidential elections with Woodrow Wilson campaigning under the slogan of the New Freedom; Theodore Roosevelt, as a Progressive splitting the Republican Party; and Eugene Debs polling a million votes in a pre-women's suffrage electorate of less than half the present voting population.

Every ferment of the time billed itself as insurgence and advance. The sifting of time has compelled a different labelling for some. Theodore Roosevelt as a "progressive" now seems grotesque. There were equally mistaken identities in the literary "upsurge."

It would take too much space here to attempt to separate out all the tendencies confused together in the literature of that period and particularly in the enormous stop-over camp of the "new poetry." There were, however, two main trends. One moved toward the centers of life and the poets following it, not always consciously, strove to become people's poets. The others edged toward the periphery, toward the isolate; or: seeking to express and appeal to the perceptions of the exquisite individual. They became, deliberately or involuntarily, coterie poets.

Both broke from the old forms; but where the first made the break for the sake of more immediate and wider communication and experimented, to that end, with the free rhythms of conversation and with recitable ballad forms, the second subtilized and restricted communication and cultivated form as a content in itself. The formalists, as we now call them, whatever they have called themselves, considered art an "autonomous" function only temporarily, if at all, connected with society. Few of them have changed. In a recent issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature* the imagist John Gould Fletcher echoed himself in a new call for "the autonomy of art."

Had the momentum of 1912 continued, the first rather than the second trend might have won dominance. But the World War detoured the insurgent drives. Then the postwar let-down drained energies off into the disillusionment which expressed itself in cynicism (or faith in nothing), and its tangent, psychism (or faith in the impossible). Both were to be seen in the victorious formalist poetry of the twenties. The psychism was there, not so much as a content as a sacramental attitude, the presumption of a special, innate spiritual function.

In the victory of formalism, poetry as a social life-force was enfeebled. The poets attained their "autonomy"; but it was autonomy on an ice-floe, dissolving wherever it approached populated shores.

The arrogant, distilled work of American formalists, for all the distinction of their best examples, never won popular acceptance or became an influence in American life. Most of them repudiated such a prospect and in some the repudiation took the form of sheer physical separation. They became expatriates, and one has carried the separation to the extreme of political treachery to his people.

In contrast, as an example of the part poetry might have played had the first trend won, we may recall the social sense as well as popular success of the poetry of Edgar Lee Masters and Stephen Vincent Benet, some of whose volumes competed with best selling novels; or of Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, whose poems gave a literary satisfaction so spontaneous that they reached masses of people in vaudeville recitations.

WHEN the foundationless Coolidge "prosperity," which the "great engineer" Hoover had been elected to perpetuate, caved in, there was a taking stock and re-evaluation all over America. Poetry, seemingly most remote, was among the first sections in American culture to be affected.

The consciousness of human fellowship evoked by common suffering and fears, and the indignation over the injustices and incompetence of a way of life that was so disastrously discrediting itself, provided a new content in poetry. Ironically enough it was then that the completeness of the formalists' triumph became clear. Poets could find no better container for the new content than the old formalist molds.

The new poetry that appeared during the depression years has been variously termed "social," "social-conscious," "Marxist," "left," "protest," "revolution," etc. Since in my opinion the term social poetry is the most inclusive and convenient, it is the one I use throughout this article.

Though it has been the fashion to picture it as having had an almost absolute and, by enemies, despotic reign, the successes of social poetry were limited and brief. The leading formalist poets held aloof or launched savage polemics against it. Even in its most triumphant period its enemies had access as poets and critics to the bigger magazines, receiving ardent respect rather than grudging acknowledgements in the chief review mediums; and, as lecturers, were admitted to the bigger circuits and the larger universities. It is sufficient to recall the heavily subsidized and elaborately organized Humanist movement launched as a counter-revolutionary intellectualism which developed the small American fascist intelligentsia.

The social poets reached any audience beyond the small left press only by grace of a few stunned rather than acquiescent editors on liberal journals and in publishing houses. And even on the liberal journals, the stunned editors soon recovered their subsidized poise.

The real power of social poetry was in its appeal to the younger writer. Had it had anything like a fair field it would unquestionably have won over quite completely the new literary generation. A fair field, however, is precisely what it cannot expect.

For its new tasks the social poetry of the depression years was cramped by the strained forms it was using. The results were often incongruous, like beer served in liqueur glasses; and sometimes they were destroyed by the forms, like something contained in a medium with which it has a destructive chemical reaction.

The question of form, however, I will return to at another time. Here I am concerned with the eclipse that social poetry, never permitted to cast its full light, soon suffered. This eclipse, it is important to note, was not the consequence of a change of taste. The taste for this poetry, like the poetry itself, was not permitted any kind of organic development. It was simply cut off.

The eclipse was nothing else than political repression. It was part of the reaction that, on the very day after the establishment of such agencies as the WPA, planned their destruction. The terrorism that has driven progressives out of government bureaus, teaching posts, etc., replaced an atmosphere of hope with that of fear. Physically and psychically the reaction closed over social poetry. Shut out of all but the harried left press, there its appearance meant inclusion in the index of repression.

ONE has only to examine the poetry written since the reaction set in, sometime in 1936, to see that it was not social poetry alone but all poetry that had become the victim of Red-baiting. Thereby a long development was cut short.

In the post-World War disillusionment, when poetry was detoured into formalism, even then its protesting cynicism and aloofness had been an implicit social criticism. In its demand for autonomy it set up at the same time the spiritual and self-sufficient values of art as against the philistine and parasitic values of the "Coolidge prosperity."

In the next phase, as the Coolidge pros-

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perity collapsed, poetry went from implicit to explicit social criticism. Important changes such as this occur, usually by way of a succession of literary generations. Social poetry was the contribution, primarily, of the young poets of the "depression generation," though an impressive minority of the older and established poets joined them.

This development in poetry was organic in relation to American literary evolution, and organic also in its response to events. The repression arrested the development of American poetry and frustrated a whole American literary generation. Let us examine some of the consequences.

In some case the consequence was sheer physical extinction. The tragically premature death of young poets like Sol Funaroff and Alexander Bergman, can quite directly be laid to the repression. In the case of Funaroff his expulsion from the WPA Writers' Project and the general blacklist of the literary left kept from him the means to secure adequate medical treatment for his "poverty heart."

In the case of others, the consequence was extinction as poets. Discouraged by the shut doors and the Red smears in the review columns a number of poets stopped writing. Some may resume in freer times but the literary death of a number of talented social poets may be added to the victories of the repression.

Other poets attentuated their poetry production turning chiefly to the, as yet, dilute form of the radio verse play and the satirical song lyric.

In radio, because the medium is still comparatively new and because the war has imposed a minimum standard for social content, there have been some opportunities for the social poet. To place any reliance in it would be delusion. Something so sold to the big advertiser offers no more future to the social poet than the *Saturday Evening Post*. The only hope is that organized listener demand may force some allotment of time to poetry in radio, for which it is the best public medium yet devised.

In the satirical song lyric the social poet has somewhat securer prospects. Satire enjoys a tolerance extended to no other literary form. But, at best, the musical comedy stage can be a market for only a minute part of the potential output of social poetry.

Other social poets, in despair or opportunism, have turned renegade and are producing a sort of parody of the twenties. With the return of some gilded youth as subsidizers of the arts which they hastily abandoned during the depression years, a new era of little magazines, patronage, and cult snobbery has come in.

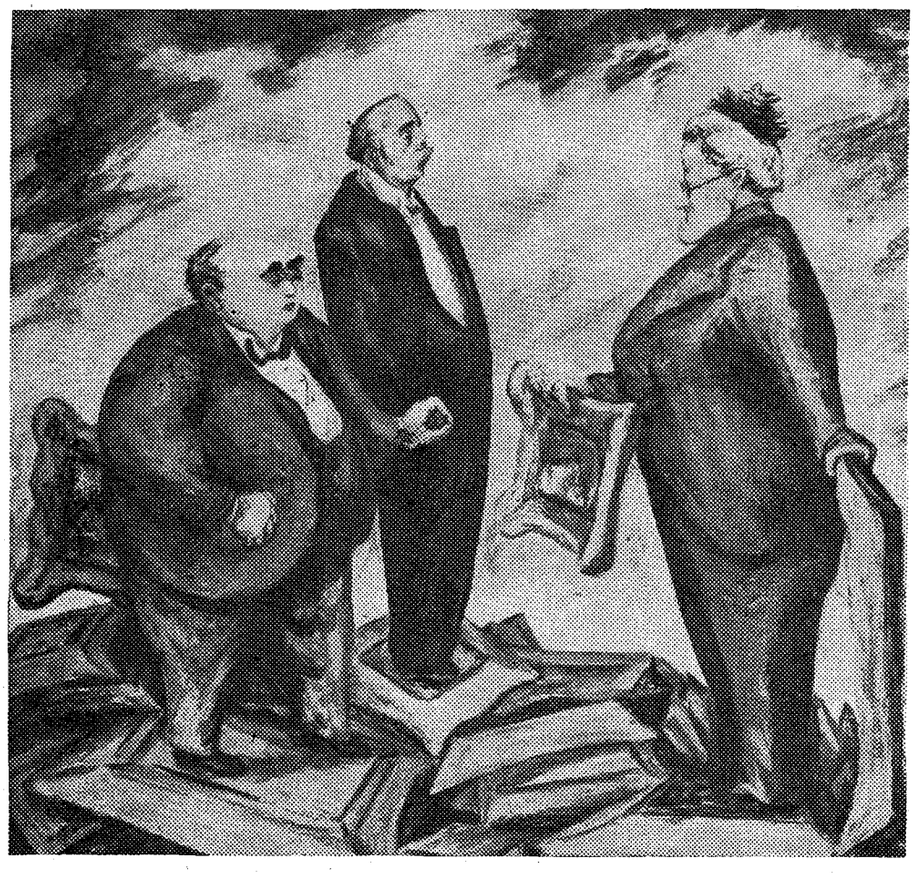
But it is all reduced in scale and altered in outlook. Formerly even the esthetes were rebels of a sort. Now they are conscious reactionaries. Now it is not the materialism of the philistines that they rage at but "Marxist materialism" knowing that the literary future belongs to the left and that this heritage cannot long be witheld from it.

In the new esthete circles the substitutes for the jeered social content are things too far gone in decomposition to be named a decadence. The substitutes include a mysticism sunk to incantations, a cynicism that despairs even of the refuge of hedonism, and an increasingly frantic perversity. I have read young poets of these circles who wish to be taken for old men, even for impotent men, even for evil men.

This need not surprise us. Morality by its nature is social. It cannot even be conceived of except as a *social* relationship. Consequently poets who abjure social function and social responsibilty, who press to the limits of individualism, must come, in time, to think like little Neros.

Nevertheless it is not to be denied that these circles exert influence. Frustrated of social participation, denied effective and honorable function, poets again stake out their "autonomy," seek any realm, however insubstantial, in which they count. Here they swell beyond morals or sense; but as they swell they feel big. It is no wonder that some promising poets have been enticed and that some are attempting an eerie synthesis of their past and their present, posing their own "revision" of surrealism as a super-Marxism.

The social poets who continue stubbornly writing their poetry are left with NEW MASSES as virtually their sole medium. This, unfortunately, means a space ration insufficient for literary subsistence.



"The Dealers," by Mervin Jules

WHAT can social poets do? Obviously it is to their interest to aid every force that combats the repression. At this moment it means to give their energies to combating its world form, fascism. Fortunately in that battle, there is every prospect of victory.

After the war any reaction that may have to be faced will best be fought again in association with the labor movement at home. In that case poets, if they hope for a free development, will have to do more. They will probably have to make sacrifices of time, energy and personal means, as in the past, to establish magazines of their own, to organize readings, to perform the difficult but necessary and productive labors by which social poetry, even in its most active days in the early thirties, maintained itself.

For me, the most hopeful though, unfortunately, still the most distant prospect is the development of a mature trade union press. This is the one secure basis for itself that social poetry can look forward to. Ordinary editorial doors have swept open and shut in the seesaw of American political life. But with a trade-union press social poetry can retain a base through most shifts and changes. Then social poetry may have the opportunity so far denied to it, the opportunity to complete its develop-

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Poems from South America

TWELVE SPANISH AMERICAN POETS. *Edited by H. R. Hays. Yale University Press. $3.50.*

THERE will soon be no excuse—there is, as a matter of fact, no excuse now—for English language readers remaining unacquainted with the stimulating body of verse that is being produced in the Latin American, and in particular the Spanish-speaking, countries. Last year we had Dudley Fitts' excellent *Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry*, published by New Directions; and now Mr. H. R. Hays, who had a considerable hand in the Fitts volume, comes forward with what might be looked upon as a highly personalized addendum to this collection.

Mr. Hays gives us a garnering which obviously represents his own preferences and criteria of importance. His object, he tells us, has been to provide "a bird's-eye view of contemporary Spanish-American poetry"; but while he does afford us some fascinating glimpses, in his skillfully and conscientiously translated English versions alongside the original texts, he hardly can be said to have achieved his professed purpose. There are too many omissions of important social-minded and esthetically mature poets, especially from the neighborhood of Argentina, who for one reason or another do not happen to fit in with Mr. Hays' scheme. In other words, this reviewer finds the collection lacking in that critical objectivity which would justify the "bird's-eye view."

Nor is this merely that question of ultimate selection or rejection which always comes up—so harrowingly, not to say heart-breakingly—in connection with any anthology. Whatever one personally may think of his work, one simply cannot omit a poet like the Argentinian Raul Gonzalez Tunon (who has failed to find a place with Mr. Fitts). As for Mr. Hays, I cannot help feeling that he is still, lingeringly, oversold on modern isms, those isms which I myself reported, with extensive samples, in *The European Caravan* of a dozen years ago. He is still worrying about Cocteau and his *Le Potomak* of 1914, Guillaume Apollinaire and the "poetic cubists," the Dadaists, surrealists, ultraists, creationists, or what have you, and their influence upon, and representatives in, the field of Spanish American verse. He devotes a section of his introduction to a none too exact reportage of the European, chiefly the French, movements.

Now it is unquestionably true, as anyone possessed of a bowing acquaintance with Latin American culture is aware, that the literature and above all the poetry of these peoples, for the past century and more, have been tremendously influenced by Gallic models (rather than by Spanish or Portuguese); but ever since French symbolism left its profound imprint on Spanish-American *modernismo*, through the great Ruben Dario, who died in 1916, that influence has been discernibly on the wane, as is apparent in the personal-poetic evolution of Pablo Neruda. Indeed, the turn in Spanish-American verse is, I believe, most sharply marked by the change of direction which Neruda made about 1925, a direction that found its conscious goal with the Spanish people's struggle, in 1937. This was distinctly a turn toward a poetry of social content, toward a people's poetry.

It is perhaps significant that, in his note on Neruda, Mr. Hays, who in his note in the Fitts volume had ignored the social change in the poet's work, is now forced to recognize it, but with a certain timid reluctance, as the possible beginning of a new phase, although this new period has already been signalized by the magnificent songs for Stalingrad and other poems to the Red Army and the Soviet Union, poems which are not included here.

In short, and to repeat, Mr. Hays is loath to part with his isms, even though he is by no means without a social consciousness that is close to Marxism. He likes this kind of verse, and he gives you what he likes. In his translations, where a poet of another kind is concerned, he does not, as I felt he sometimes did in the Fitts anthology, touch up the originals, but renders them with fidelity.

The thing is—and this is the basic criticism—that most of these post-symbolist Spanish-American imitators of the European modernist schools have a mystic or pseudo-mystic muddied content, and stand, in reality, beside the swelling stream of the new poetry, which is rapidly becoming a torrent. Many of them, including some in this volume, are, I am convinced, destined to be swept away by that torrent. They will not last. Others, like Neruda, have taken what they wanted (which is not too much) from the techniques of modernism and have put it at the service of a people's art. Occasionally, and even Neruda is not to be excepted here, these carry-overs are an encumbrance rather than an asset.

For your information, the poets included in this collection are: Ramon Lopez Velarde, Luis Carlos Lopez, Vicente Huidobro (the Chilean creationist, who is given a disproportionate stress), Eugenio Florit, Jorge Luis Borges, Jorge Carrera Andrade (an important, socially conscious poet), Jose Gorostiza, Pablo de Rokha, Nicolas Guillen (the great West Indian Negro singer), Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, and Jacinto Fombona Pachano.

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In conclusion, this reviewer would say: for a solid meal, go to the Fitts anthology, and take the present volume as a tantalizing but at times somewhat fluffy dessert. Do not expect it to fulfill the editor's announced intention: "to represent the most important contemporary trends." It is, none the less, well and seriously done within its chosen scope, and you will want it for your Latin American poetry shelf.

SAMUEL PUTNAM.

Composer from Klin

TCHAIKOVSKY, *by Herbert Weinstock. Knopf. $5.00.*

THIS is a full-size biography of Tchaikovsky. The author has done a most painstaking job in gathering data from the latest sources published in the Soviet Union on the hundredth anniversary of Tchaikovsky's birth in 1940, particularly the valuable day-to-day chronology of the composer's life, prepared by the curators of the Tchaikovsky Museum at Klin. Mr. Weinstock has also obtained from Russia the pictures of the Klin Museum after it was desecrated by the Nazi hordes, and a photograph of the rooms restored by the Soviet authorities when the vandals were expelled. These photographs constitute an eloquent commentary on the continuity of the great cultural traditions in the Soviet Union, which the enemy of Russian art and civilization was fortunately prevented from utterly destroying.

In an introductory chapter, Mr. Weinstock gives a brief survey of Russian history and culture at the time Tchaikovsky was born in 1840. He mentions the names of the great Russian poets and writers, with dates for chronological orientation. Tchaikovsky's biography is then unfolded, from cradle to death, in nineteen chapters. There are no special headings for the chapters, and the whole exposition is matter-of-fact, excellently and lucidly presented, without attempt at dramatization. The well known facts of Tchaikovsky's aberrations are mentioned as a legitimate part of a human biography, but all lurid speculation is left out. Similarly, the story of Tchaikovsky's extraordinary relationship with his financial benefactress, Madame von Meck, whom he never met face to face, is treated without a dramatic build-up.

Weinstock's book is thus a sober biographical account of an extraordinary Russian genius, whose art is now one of the most powerful factors in the development of music in the Soviet Union. It is significant that Shostakovich has time and again proclaimed his creative kinship with Tchaikovsky. Soviet musicians keep Tchaikovsky's music in their hearts, because he expresses the national spirit of the people. Fortunately, Mr. Weinstock understands the importance of Tchaikovsky not only as

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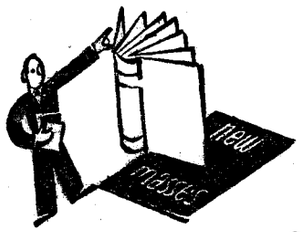

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a universal genius, but as a peculiarly Russian genius. He also reminds the reader that Tchaikovsky is not always the poet of gloom, but that the brightest and the most optimistic pages of typically Russian, and joyously Russian music, are found in Tchaikovsky's symphonies.

To an American reader, the chapter dealing with the composer's American tour in 1891 presents a particular fascination. Mr. Weinstock describes in great detail from Tchaikovsky's diary and from the contemporary files of American newspapers all the peripeteia of Tchaikovsky's concerts in various American cities. There is a reproduction of a page of the old New York *Herald*, with an account of Tchaikovsky's concert at the opening of what is now Carnegie Hall.

Tchaikovsky's music is discussed by Mr. Weinstock only in relation to his life. There is a catalogue of works at the end of the book, but no analysis, and no musical annotations. This treatment may be an advantage from a biographer's standpoint, but a reader who seeks an understanding of Tchaikovsky's greatness as a musician will be somewhat disappointed. The combined picture of Tchaikovsky the man, and Tchaikovsky the musician, still eludes the researchers, but this is a difficulty of presentation that confronts every biographer of a great artist. The fact remains that Mr. Weinstock has brilliantly performed the task he has set himself, to give a complete biographical account of his subject.

Mr. Weinstock's scholarship is of the first order. There is no sloppiness in his presentation of facts, no padding of data. The characterization of contemporary figures is finely drawn, and permits the reader to follow the intermingled relationships without difficulty. Mr. Weinstock is most careful not to paint old Russia in uniformly black colors, and he shows that behind the old society's barbarities and absurdities there was an unquenchable spirit of progress. He justly points out the continuity of Russian culture in the new Russia, and time and again mentions the popularity of Tchaikovsky in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Weinstock pays special attention to the proper transliteration of Russian names, but one may doubt the expediency of transcribing Eugene Onegin as Yevgeny Onyengin. In some cases, Mr. Weinstock himself bows to the traditional spelling. He gives the dates in the Gregorian calendar, adding twelve days to the Russian nineteenth-century date. Mr. Weinstock's facts and chronology are eminently reliable. It is perhaps pedantic to mention it, but the only slight departure from fact is his statement on page four that the eighteenth-century Russian musician Maxim Berezovsky shot himself. He didn't: he slashed himself with a razor, and lingered for some weeks before he succumbed to his wounds.

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY.

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Destination Tokyo

By Daniel Prentiss

"DESTINATION TOKYO" comes as a magnificent summation of Warner Brothers' record of accomplishment in the war year 1943. From every point of view—content, technique, production, entertainment values—the film is simply a prodigious job. My heartiest congratulations to the studio, to screen writer Albert Maltz, director Delmar Davis, cameraman Bert Glennon and his assistants, and to a letter-perfect cast which numbers, among others, Cary Grant, John Garfield, Alan Hale, Tom Tully, Robert Hutton, and William Prince. And after NEW MASSES readers see *Destination Tokyo* they will agree most certainly that special effects men Lawrence Butler and Willard Van Enger are no less deserving.

To me, the extraordinary thing about *Destination Tokyo* is its especial *American* flavor. Other films have possessed this quality—*Guadalcanal Diary* to some extent, *This is the Army*, and *Happy Land*—but none to this outstanding degree.

Destination Tokyo relates the story of the USS *Copperfin*, a submarine that stole into Tokyo Bay. In the dead of night it put ashore three observers who radioed their findings to General Doolittle's men aboard the carrier *Wasp*. But in the process of telling the story the film furnishes keen understanding of what makes the American tick—his basic motivations and emotional physiognomy. How much of its success in this respect can be attributed to the fact that the action takes place in the close quarters of a pigboat, we are not prepared to say. Certain it is, however, that the *mise-en-scene* is ideally suited to bring out the innermost qualities of the characters. After the intimacy and sudden revealments of a long submarine cruise there's very little the crew doesn't know about one another. The makers of *Destination Tokyo* take splendid advantage of this circumstance.

Perhaps another reason for its peculiarly American quality is what you might call its inspired gadgetry. Your reviewer has had a pretty fair grounding in the documentary film, is in fact a postgraduate of the school, but he has seldom, if ever, found himself as wonderingly absorbed in matters mechanical as during the unfolding of *Destination Tokyo*. Just to contemplate the mysterious workings of the submarine's complicated devices is a genuine esthetic experience.

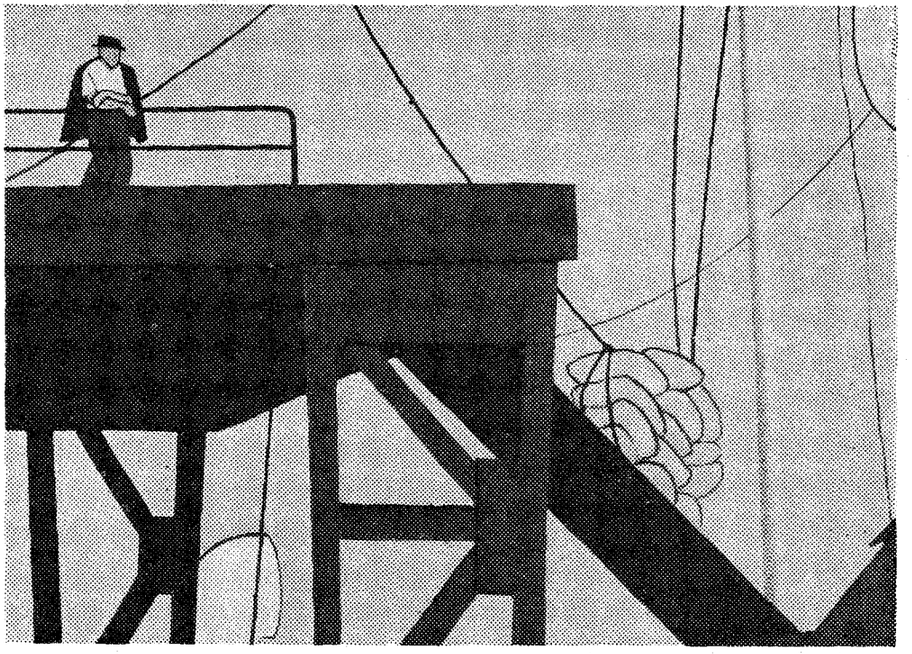
On the other hand, true-blue documentarians, to give them their due, might argue with some justice that the film's picturization of a sub's interiors departs from the strictly realistic—that, for example, no pigboat was ever as roomy as Warner Brothers indicate. I'll concede the point for the argument's sake though I'm inclined to overlook it as an allowable license. But I cannot hold with those who contend with mildish clamor that the film is too tightly packed with incident for its own good and point to its running time of two hours and a quarter as excessive. There's little in the picture I'd do without. Where would you cut? You certainly wouldn't scissor Garfield's imaginary encounters with the opposite sex, Grant's moving remembrances of the family he left behind in Oklahoma City, the appendectomy performed by the ship's pharmacist whose only preparation has been one year of college chemistry, the remarkable dive-bombing sequence or the sub's evasion of the Tokyo harbor nets. No, scissors are not called for.

For my money *Destination Tokyo* just about writes *finis* to the artificially engendered controversy over whether the public has tired of war films, and to the related issue—entertainment versus propaganda. The film entertains while it admirably instructs, while it projects in thoroughly convincing and intense fashion the philosophy that moves the armies of the United Nations against the Axis. So far as Warner Brothers' money is concerned, *Destination* is SRO from its first frame onward.

It was only by the most heroic exertion—showing up at the Strand Theater at 7:45 AM—that I succeeded in getting a view of *Destination Tokyo*. Five previous attempts, made at more reasonable hours, had been thwarted by the earlier arrival of many thousands of our fellow citizens and movie-goers. But perhaps I've convinced you it was worth the trouble.

MGM's *A Guy Named Joe*, so titled from General Chennault's contribution to Bartlett's *Quotations*—"Boys, when I'm at the stick, I'm just a guy named Joe,"—trips the light aerial fantastic and provides sufficient laughter for an evening's spending. Pete, the guy named Joe, played by Spencer Tracy (are you confused?) is a flyer in the US Air Force whose number is up. (There is too much of this "number-up" hokypoky in the film for complete comfort.) He crashes and ascends to the flyers' heaven where he is assigned as guardian angel and tutor to a young pilot down below. The youngster, a guy name Joe—Van Johnson on the Screen Actors Guild dues roster—though unaware of Pete's presence learns his lessons well, so well in fact that he becomes enamored of his angel's terrestrial love, Irene Dunne. Whereupon Pete turns angelically malicious for a while and feeds him the wrong savee. But after a dressing down in the heavenly abode Pete gives out with the right dope and all is well.

Screen-writer Dalton Trumbo has drawn rather liberally on *Calling Mr. Jordan* of a few years back and on his own *The Remarkable Andrew*, and we



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thought we noted a nod in the direction of Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby and Mr. O'Malley* series.

As can be seen, *A Guy Named Joe* is played primarily for its mirthful potentialities. But there is a sufficiently sober core in the film—an awareness of the decisive issues of the day—to keep matters from flying into the realm of frivolity for frivolity's sake.

Ruth Gordon in Ruth Gordon

As AUTHOR and leading player, Ruth Gordon is having herself quite a time in a new comedy called *Over Twenty-one*. But without the help of George S. Kaufman, brilliant director and rewrite man, I can see where she might have had trouble. If I were Ruth Gordon, the actress, I would send Ruth Gordon, the writer, back to school. As a play *Over Twenty-one* recalls a definition of playwriting once made by Shaw. The first act, he said, is devoted to introducing the characters to each other, the second, to introducing the actors to the audience, and the third to getting the audience out of the theater.

As a skillful pair of theatrical practitioners, Gordon and Kaufman douse the meager substance of the script with the catsup of laughter to make it palatable, and in a large measure they succeed. They exploit every source of humor, from sure-fire hokum to mature urbane wit. Sometimes they overreach themselves. Taste this one, for instance. Ruth Gordon, a famous Hollywood playwright, comes to Florida, where her newspaper husband is an officer candidate. Upon greeting him she asks, "Where is your hornpipe?" He tells her that those things belong in the Navy, and please not to encroach on the Navy. "Oh, I see," replies the wife, "encroach in the Navy, enlist in the Army."

That chestnut is probably the coldest of the evening, although there are other things no first rate comedy would countenance. The first act is built almost completely on such effects as windows that fly open at odd times, light switches on the wrong side of the door frame, a refrigerator that sounds like a sewing machine begging to be pensioned off, no plumbing in the kitchen, and similar entrenched didoes of farce. At one point the lady puts cotton in her ears that she may sleep more soundly. When the telephone rings, a gigantic whisper sweeps through the house. She won't be able to hear. Miss Gordon comes through nobly. "Talk louder," she screams, and the audience is supposed to beat itself to death with merriment.

In all fairness, however, let it be said that once the first act is left behind, the deftness of the actor-director combination begins to make itself felt. The action of the

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play, although not based on a progressing dramatic tempo, is smartly handled with that well-oiled gesture, the happy dialog. In fact, you could forgive the play almost all its transgressions, were it not for the lame business that closes the show. Because of the thin situations it surprised no one, least of all the play's architects, that something more would be needed to keep the play on its feet until the final curtain. So Kaufman (or maybe Gordon) rummaged around and came up with a sere piece of corn from *Once in a Lifetime*—the old fabulous Hollywood producer, the ignorant genius accompanied by a blond secretary two heads taller, who is really his you-know-what. The you-know-what is always couched in a pad and pencil pose ready to take down as potential dialog all words casually dropped by the wondrous playwright. The world moves on, and this parody is pretty musty by now. I believe the West Coast industry, by its war record, has earned a rest from this kind of buffoonery.

All the members of the cast do a beautiful job. From Ruth Gordon and Harvey Stephens to Philip Loeb and Loring Smith, the players are sure-footed and easy to watch. If you like the Kaufman touch and the Gordon technique, both present in great profusion, you will find this play, despite its many faults, more fun than most plays now running.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

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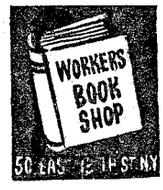

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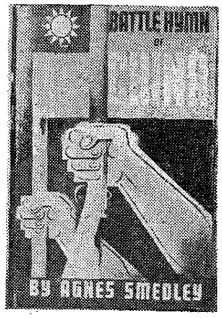

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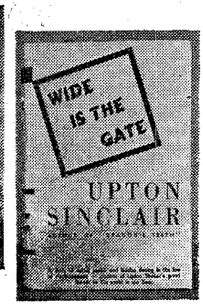

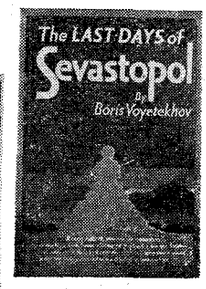

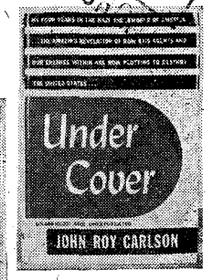

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